LLOYD GEORGE'S LAST FIGHT

GORDON WEST

N.C. EDSALL
1960

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BY

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THE WHY AND WHEREFORE

THIS story I have to tell is in no sense a political history: rather is it the tale of my personal experiences as an adventurer into politics. It is an attempt to present a picture of my own reactions to some of the comedies, the humanities, and the follies in which the leaders of a political organisation were involved when their party was engaged in a great struggle for survival which may well have been the last in its history. It is an attempt, also, to present some pictures that are seldom hung in the public gallery: of political celebrities behind the scenes, of their own reactions to successes and adversities, and of their moods in a variety of circumstances.

In painting these pictures of the Liberal interior I have used neither whitewash nor mud. I present them as they were revealed to me

during an intimate and entertaining association with one who, in spite of many vicissitudes, yet remains the most vital and interesting personality in British politics—David Lloyd George. A man very subtle, very human and in some ways very simple, possessing most of the weaknesses that we find in ourselves and others—particularly in others; a man who can successfully direct a nation during a stupendous war and yet can find relaxation in cowboy novels and Wild West films; whose musical enthusiasms stop at "Old Man River," and whose favourite drink is buttermilk!

I first became associated with him at the beginning of 1928, when I was invited to join the organisation which he was then building up in preparation for the General Election of May, 1929. As editor of the publications of that organisation I saw a great deal of the man and his methods; later, as acting director of his own personal propaganda and of the propaganda of the Liberal Party, I came into close contact with him in his private life, when he cast off the garments of the political leader and donned those of the normal human being. It was natural that this association should take me into many unexpected places in his service: as, for example,

to the United States of America, where I foregathered with all manner of American politicians, from Tammany toughs and Chicago gunmen to prospective Presidents, in cities as far apart as Richmond, Chicago, and Omaha, for the purpose of finding for him ideas that might assist the return of himself and his Party to power. It carried me also into the inner councils of the Party, into his private life, into his moods; and necessitated my undertaking some curious missions in the interests of the Party and its members.

I am writing as an impartial observer, not as a politician. My tales are the tales of a traveller who, using his powers of observation as he moves through new country, describes only those things that most interest him, eliminating those that fail to make a deep impression on his mind. And since, from the age of twenty-four, I have ceased to have a definite and static political persuasion, my observations are without political bias.

To me the fascination of these journeys in political life was the greater because they occurred at so momentous a period in the Party's history. I saw the less attractive, the petty side

of the struggle, but I saw also the finer side. I saw men going into this political scramble knowing full well that they were foredoomed to failure, yet continuing in order to encourage those who deluded themselves with the belief that they had a chance. I saw hopes raised and dashed alternatively; leaders blinding themselves by mistaking insignificant trifles for momentous signs and portents; men of wide experience in the game of politics failing utterly to adapt themselves and their methods to the changes wrought by time and what we are accustomed to call progress. To me these things were more fascinating than any political history, because they gave me a glimpse of political history in the making, and of the methods employed in the making. And more intriguing than this making of history were the activities of the men who for good or ill were engaged in the task.

Here, then, is my reason for writing this book. Those whose votes can make or destroy the fortunes of a Party are accustomed to see political leaders as politicians rather than as normal human beings. In spite of the popular press, which so assiduously and often so inanely records what purports to be their private activities, the intimate lives of political leaders behind the

scenes are always somewhat shrouded in obscurity. In the past, before I formed my connection with a political party, I used to wonder in what manner political leaders reacted in secret to their victories and defeats, how they spent their leisure during times of anxiety or eclipse, in what manner their moods at such times affected those with whom they were in close contact. But now my curiosity has been satisfied; and because I believe that others may be inspired by a similar curiosity which they cannot satisfy, I offer them these chapters.

In so doing, I realise that it is inevitable that a story of the activities of the Liberal Party during the two years preceding the 1929 General Election should begin with a chapter on Lloyd George. And it is inevitable, too, that Lloyd George should predominate through most of the succeeding chapters. For not only was he the one member of the Party who in any way stimulated the public imagination, but he also was the only member who wielded any real power behind the scenes. He was undoubtedly the autocrat of the Liberal Campaign Department, that expensive organisation which was formed by him and financed by a lavish expenditure of the Fund that in the public mind had

grown to the dimensions of Ali Baba's treasure. And because he was able thus to form and control his own organisation, his personality was impressed upon it so strongly that he comes inevitably into the foreground of the picture. I shall show a few others grouped close beside him, and again others forming the remoter background. One might ignore many of them if one desired; but from the dominating figure in the foreground one cannot escape.

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FIRST CHAPTER

RETROSPECT : LLOYD GEORGE AT HOME : HE ORGANISES A RACE : ROUND THE FARM AT CHURT : TORY GEESE AND ANTI-LIBERAL PIGS : COWBOYS AT HINDHEAD : WHEN MEGAN HID A SMILE : L.G. DANCES FOR JOY : WILD FORECASTS.

ONLY once had I encountered Lloyd George before I joined him in 1928 at his headquarters in Old Queen Street, Westminster. It was in Camberwell on a certain Saturday morning during the last year of the War. The day was bleak and depressing, and the spirits of the people of Camberwell, like the spirits of most people in Britain, were sunk in gloom, because the War was weighing heavily upon them. The street had been depressing enough in its normal state, for it was one in which every little drab house was of a uniform pattern, and every little bow window was hung with dingy lace curtains

looped with faded blue or green ribbon into triangular-shaped apertures, and in almost every aperture stood a bamboo tripod supporting a round pot containing an aspidistra. But on this day the street was not normal: half of it had been transformed overnight into tumbled heaps of yellowish bricks, and the bamboo tripods and aspidistras and curtains lay shattered and torn among the bricks.

On one pile of bricks, which only the day before had been a part of her front parlour, a bedraggled, weary woman crouched, with her arms on her knees, and her forehead resting on her arms, sobbing and moaning.

"If on'y we 'adn't been rowin' just before," she moaned. "If on'y we 'adn't been rowin'."

Only a few hours previously they had taken her husband's body from under the pile of bricks and shattered furniture and torn lace which had been her home before the bomb fell upon it.

In other parts of the street other men and women, with the terror of death written upon their white, trouble-worn faces, stood about in groups, some talking in voices hushed by catastrophe, some numbed into silence by shock and the tragedy of their loss.

Suddenly from a ragged hole in the front of a house stepped, hat in hand, a little man with a large head covered with thick longish hair that was turning grey. He stood for a moment surveying the desolation of the shattered homes, and then he began to walk slowly among the heaps of fallen brickwork. As he passed the bereaved woman he paused a moment and rested a hand on her shoulder; and when she looked up he turned and pointed to the inner wall of what had once been her bedroom, which had been exposed by the bomb that had killed her husband. Hanging on the dingy red wallpaper was a Crucifix, unharmed—one of those pseudo-miracles that seemed to occur so often during the war, to the delight of religious propagandists; all else had been shattered. The woman gazed, at first uncomprehendingly; then understanding dawned in her eyes, and she remained gazing while Lloyd George, the Prime Minister, passed on.

A sentimental picture, one may say, now that the emotions of those days have faded into memories. Or again, according to your political persuasion, you may prefer to observe that it is the picture of a shrewd man popularising himself with the multitude. But whatever your reaction, you cannot deny that the gesture to-

wards the crucifix was a gesture of genius, and that a man who in the midst of a war can trouble to interest himself in the tribulations of a dozen weary, bewildered men and women, when he might have devoted the time to a public speech that would have popularised him among millions, is at least a humanitarian.

My second encounter with him was during an autumn day ten years later, on a windy field on a hillside near Hindhead. A general election that might decide the fate of the man and his party for all time loomed near.

A ploughman is making the kind of sounds that ploughmen do make to their horses, as the animal stops at the edge of the field and with lowered head pulls the plough round to start a new furrow.

The same small man, now with snow-white hair blowing in the wind, comes walking up the field by the hedgerow, accompanied by two other men, one of whom is guiding a small hand-steered motor cultivator whose virtues are about to be demonstrated.

"This should be as good a place as any," he says. "The earth isn't so stony, and you can get a good run uphill as well as on the level."

He opens a shooting-stick, prods it into the

ground, and sits on it, while the others pull the sputtering cultivator into position. Suddenly, as the horse and plough again reach the edge of the field, Lloyd George rises with a touch of excitement and exclaims:

"Let's have a race—motor versus horse. A race. Come along—" calling to the ploughman. "You'll have to look to your laurels. See if you can beat the motor."

He laughs and his eyes twinkle at the prospect of this piece of fun. The motor cultivator and the horse plough are drawn into line, and when they are ready he cries, "Now, off you go."

It is a race between past and present, between scientific and primitive method. The ploughman urges on the horse with cries of encouragement; the man steering the cultivator bends low over the handles and cuts deep through the brown earth. The ploughman continually turns his head, resentfully observing the progress of his rival. Then the horse turns once and looks back, seemingly as resentful as his driver. The horse plough gains a few yards.

And back there at the edge of the field the little man with ruddy face and white hair is chuckling and bending himself half-double at the fun. He grasps my arm in his excitement.

"Look, the old horse is winning, he's winning," he cries, and slaps his thighs with loud-sounding thwacks at the thrill of it. He positively bounds about. "No, the motor's gaining, it's gaining," he cries a moment later, with a shade of disappointment. "Science is winning. Science is winning."

He stands leaning forward with his hands on his knees to watch the end of the race. He has completely forgotten that this was to have been a demonstration, and that the two men have brought the motor cultivator many miles specially to demonstrate its perfection; his interest is in the race. He has turned a serious, scientific morning into a morning of schoolboyish fun, and he is thoroughly enjoying himself.

He always enjoys himself on his farm at Churt, near Hindhead. During the months that preceded the last general election he found his chief relaxation from the anxieties of party leadership and party quarrels among the pine-hills of that lovely country. And yet the farm is not sufficient for him: he soon tires of seclusion, and becomes bored by lack of change. He could not remain there for long without inviting friends and acquaintances to enliven the days. And those friends and acquaintances must be entertaining, lively people, for Lloyd George

cannot long tolerate the company of the dull.

But whether they were dull or entertaining, he could seldom resist the temptation of showing them the farm. It was and is still his hobby, on which he has spent many thousands of pounds. He loves to show visitors the productive fields which he has reclaimed from the rough, stony heather-hills of Churt. He is intensely proud of them; wide, well-kept tracts of land that had never been cultivated since the beginning of time until he took them in hand. He reveals all the pleasure of the creator when he takes you round these fields. He will show you one field in particular on which he has lavished tremendous care. Nothing would grow in the stony earth; but by experimenting, he turned it into valuable productive land. He found that the ground lacked nitrogen, so he planted it with lupins. Now lupins are great collectors of nitrogen; and when they had had their day he had them ploughed into the soil, so that all the nitrogen they contained became absorbed into the earth. The last time I saw this once useless ground, it was yielding a fine crop of grain.

As you wander round the farm with him, you will notice that various animals react to him in a peculiar manner. Dogs love him, horses tolerate him, but pigs and the fowls of the air will

have none of him. He is all but terrified of pigs, because he knows they dislike him; and what can a politician do in face of the anger of fat pigs? Oratory will avail nothing in the circumstances; one can only retreat, poking them off with a stick. And Lloyd George hates retreating.

He was showing his pigs one day to a visitor who, being an enthusiastic photographer, asked him to enter the sty and be photographed with the animals.

"I dare not," he replied. "They go for me. They would have me down in the mud in no time."

You pass on to the chicken and the geese, and all show their disinclination to accept his friendship. The same enthusiastic photographer once wished to photograph him surrounded by the flock; and although Lloyd George made every effort to approach the birds, they persistently quarked and waddled away out of his reach. When he succeeded in drawing very near, they showed signs of panic and fled precipitately.

"They always elude me," he said. "But I know why. Their minds are poisoned against me. They were given to me by Lord ——. They're Tory geese!"

He does not mind the stand-offishness of the pigs, but I always felt that the unfriendliness of the fowls and the geese rather hurt his pride, particularly as he had often tempted them with food. One afternoon in my company he stood tempting them for ten minutes, edging nearer as they edged away, watching them with a sort of quizzical, half-amused expression on his face. But he could not win their confidence; always they edged suspiciously away from him, their eyes full of that expression of startled indignation common to hens who suspect evil designs in their tempter.

Not far from the farm, on a hill whereon stands Bron-y-de, the house Lloyd George built for himself among the pine-woods, is a summer-house; three of its sides are covered with vitaglass, the fourth is open to the south. We approach it through a long avenue of grass between two borders of rhododendrons of many species, a miniature Kew Gardens of colour. I call it a summer-house, but to its creator it is also a winter-house, for he uses it even in the coldest weather; he sits there and works or reads in the frosty air; and without doubt this hardihood is responsible for giving him the healthiest complexion in the House of Commons.

Sometimes he sleeps out of doors. I remem-

ber that in February, 1929, when he was recovering from a chill and had gone cruising in the Mediterranean in a small yacht, he slept on deck at night. The weather was Arctic: half the pipes in London were frozen, and the mistral was blowing across the Mediterranean; but this did not deter him from his deck-bed. One of his peculiarities is that he possesses the power to fall asleep anywhere and at any time; if he should feel tired during an electioneering tour, he falls asleep for ten minutes or so in the train or car that carries him to his next meeting. This power to sleep at will is invaluable to him, but to those who share his company it is devastating; for while he remains fresh during the days of strenuous campaigning, his associates, who can sleep only during the hours prescribed for sleep, soon become worn out with fatigue. Sometimes an unexpected afternoon visitor may find him sleeping in a chair in the garden at Bron-y-de.

This house, low-built of red brick, and tile-roofed, he erected for himself on the top of a hill, so that it overlooks many miles of country. Lloyd George's home must always dominate; his cottage in Wales is also on a hill. In the verandah you will observe a curious-looking mechanical contrivance half-concealed by a black

cover: Lloyd George's private cinema projector. No week-end at Churt is quite complete without a film show; and always the most interested and entertained spectator is Lloyd George himself. And nearly always the films are "rough stuff"; many and many a cowboy of the Wild West has raced across the screen at Churt, hurled his lassoo, and performed deeds of daring for the entertainment of this former Prime Minister. He loves action and vigour and the "wide open spaces"; I think that if the law and politics had not claimed him he might well have become some kind of a rugged adventurer. He would have enjoyed whirling the rope and seeing the noose drop over the head of an enemy, as to-day he enjoys noosing his Parliamentary enemies with verbal lassoos.

His week-end films come down from London by car, and the film operator, cinema manager, producer, mechanic, and electrician are concentrated in one individual—Lloyd George's chauffeur. It is essential that his chauffeur should be also an expert on films, for Lloyd George, unlike most men who keep private mechanical toys, cannot bring himself to bother with the details of them. The same characteristic is apparent in his attitude towards his own political organisation; he has no mind for its

details; indeed, for a man of his calibre he is almost a child in matters of detail.

He infinitely prefers a film show to a theatre; he has little interest in the type of play commonly called "straight," but he can sometimes be induced to attend a musical comedy. One night not long before the General Election he went to "The Show Boat," not so much to see the performance as to hear "Old Man River" sung by Paul Robeson. He enjoyed it enormously; thought the song an exquisite and touching thing—as indeed it is when sung with all the pathos at the command of that negro's rich and thrilling voice. He liked to hear the song at home sometimes; but he would not stir a hundred yards to hear "classical" music. Musically he is undeveloped, uneducated; music has never interested him as a study; but his intense Welshness has given him always an enthusiasm for certain types of simple, sentimental melodies, and in consequence his musical taste is essentially of the "popular" order. Hence if he were forced to eliminate music entirely from his life he would not lose a moment of happiness, he would never feel its absence.

Close by the verandah is his study—a long, light room with several windows, fashioned in a style commonly called "Old English," with a

wide arched brick fireplace containing a large basket grate. His entry to this study almost invariably turns his thoughts from the lighter side of life to the serious: he abruptly changes the conversation from the subject of play to the subject of work; and he will ask the most unexpected and disconcerting questions. Sometimes the question may have been lurking in his mind all the while he has been discussing irrelevant matters. Herein lies one of the charms of being in his company—this quality of unexpectedness. I had one day been walking with him through the farm, talking of chicken and pigs and flowers and the nature of the soil, when he turned into the study and said, with an abruptness that reminded me of a gear changing:

"The Press didn't give the attendance figures of my meeting last week."

He was intensely annoyed by this omission. To the uninitiated it may appear to be a trivial point to rouse annoyance: the big meeting had been well reported, the speech had been successful and had caused much irritation in certain regions, as well as creating that which the newspapers describe as "widespread discussion." But to Lloyd George it was equally important that they should announce the attend-

ance figure: about 20,000 persons.

"It gives an impression," he said. "Big figures suggest success. One might be making one's speech to empty air; it only becomes real to the public when they know that twenty thousand have come to listen to it. It gives them colour. They can visualise a multitude there, listening. It's very important."

Herein he reveals his sound judgment in matters of publicity, his knowledge of mob psychology. He studies effects as few living politicians study them. He gauged his effects perfectly when the election approached, and, in common with other party leaders, he was permitted to broadcast a speech. The others—the Prime Minister and Ramsay Macdonald—attended the B.B.C. studios and spoke coldly and dispassionately into a microphone, in a soundproof room. Lloyd George, listening to their uninspired perorations on his wireless set, decided that he must have his crowd. The Broadcasting authorities demurred, but eventually Lloyd George had his will. It was a masterstroke. No chilly, unenthused delivery for him, but a cheering crowd to spur him on. The speech was made in a district where he had an enthusiastic following. It began with a roar of applause that was heard by millions of wireless

listeners; it was punctuated frequently by rounds of applause; a heckler was heard, was reduced triumphantly to nothingness amid a crescendo of enthusiasm. The listening millions became a real part of the audience, were transported into the meeting, caught some of the enthusiasm of the crowd. They received an apparently undeniable proof of the Liberal leader's popularity; whereas from the speeches of the other leaders they received nothing but an impression of a voice making a speech. Lloyd George can be trusted always to think thus in terms of the spectacular; his Celtic imagination finds the hidden colours in every situation.

He often risked a good deal in obtaining his effects. Once, many months before the election, when public interest in the approaching fight was so mild that the newspapers devoted little space to speeches, he decided to buy space, like any advertising man. Certain speeches in prospect were in his view important, but perhaps dull from the public point of view; and he was determined that they should have all the space he wished them to have.

Many of those in the inner council of the Party said, "*Buy* space? Advertise? Impossible . . . It isn't done . . . There'll be a scandal . . . What are we coming to? . . ." But

Lloyd George bought space. He began by buying three columns in certain Liberal newspapers, and had them filled with speeches. When that had proved successful he bought a whole page in the same and other newspapers, and filled that with speeches. Other newspapers caught the infection and began voluntarily to devote more space to political speeches.

In connection with this enterprise an incident occurred which stirred Lloyd George to intense anger. One of the newspapers in which space had been bought suddenly decided that it could not print speeches in this manner without also printing, at the top of the page, the line that usually accompanies advertisement matter: "Advertisers' Announcements." There was an element of humour in the situation, but in such circumstances it escaped Lloyd George. He was indignant. An ominous, dull red fire crept from under his collar and suffused his pink complexion.

"What do the fellows think?" he cried. "Do they think we are on a level with Calisthenes, and that I am a kind of political Gordon Selfridge?"

His daughter Megan, who was standing near, concealed a discreet smile at this simile.

I replied, in effect, that heaven and earth had

been moved to induce the newspaper concerned to reconsider its decision—without avail.

"It's that swine —" Lloyd George answered, naming a certain editor. "Very well, if he wants to do that, we shan't buy his space. That's easily settled." And it was.

I had seldom seen him so annoyed as by this decision to treat his speeches and the speeches of his confreres as "advertisers' announcements," although technically that was exactly the right description. Lloyd George was always easily moved to anger, especially by any implication against the dignity and importance of his speeches. He seldom lost his temper completely; when he did, his eyes became pools of blazing blackness, expressionless, and his face turned dark red, and the veins of his forehead became bas-reliefs. When he was thoroughly angry he was almost terrifying.

And he was as quickly moved to jubilation as to anger. His most jubilant moment was that which brought him the news of the Holland-with-Boston by-election victory; it came a day after the triumph at Eddisbury. The first victory had been faintly hoped for, the second not anticipated. There had been a period of depression in the Party: one of those periods when party leaders speak in public with the most

sublime and heartening confidence about the "flowing tide," and in private try to devise new and popular policies to induce the said tide to show some semblance of being other than a dying ripple on a stagnant pond. A gloomy period, when everybody is affected with a sense of impending disaster, and rats meditate on the advisability of leaving a sinking ship.

Hence the news of the second of these two victories, arriving via the tape machine, threw the whole of Liberal Headquarters at Old Queen Street into a state of Mafiking. The corridors were filled with hysterically happy typists, rushing hither and thither to break the news to other departments. Telephones were ringing furiously; newspapers were demanding Lloyd George's comments on the victory, his views, and anything else they could get. A news agency was waiting for a copy of Lloyd George's message of congratulation to the successful candidate, which amid the general pandemonium I was trying to write for him with due regard to the momentousness of the occasion. And upstairs, in his oak-panelled room on the sixth floor, Lloyd George and the Chief Whip, Sir Robert Hutchison (known to his intimates, as the gossip writers would say, as "Hutch"), took hands and performed together a kind of "Here-

we-go-round-the-mulberry-bush" dance from pure joy! I think it was certainly Lloyd George's most jubilant and triumphant moment in all that year of hopes and disappointments.

He hated being cast down; and he specially disliked during this period people who in all honesty gave him gloomy forecasts. It was one of his weaknesses that he preferred optimists to pessimists. Pessimists became unpopular. Any man who forecast a none-too-successful prospect, and supported his forecast with reasonable arguments, was a pessimist. Lloyd George disliked the truth when the truth was not favourable. This desire wilfully to blind himself to things unpleasant led him to ask frequently for complicated calculations—sort of political actuarian analyses—showing the possible number of seats that might be won. It was a kind of politico-mathematical fortune-telling. Various people were asked from time to time to undertake these calculations; if one man's calculation showed a depressingly small number of seats, he was seldom asked to do another. More than one was undertaken by Colonel Tweed, then chief organiser of the Party, who had a sound knowledge of the state of the constituencies and never gave the Liberals more than 50 or 60 seats; in consequence I think Colonel Tweed's fore-

casts were not among the most popular.

There were many optimistic forecasts during the last weeks before the election. The highest came, I think, from Sir John Simon, who had recently returned from India: he was so impressed by the feeling of the country after the launching of the Unemployment Scheme that he put the result at about 200 seats. But he had been absent a great deal and was not in touch with the real position. Others varied their forecasts between 60 and 150. The only man whom I did not hear give a definite forecast was Lloyd George; he was too wise. He preferred to hear everybody else's forecast, and keep his own opinion to himself. He may have expressed his opinion privately to his intimates; but beyond them nobody knew his real opinion.

He seemed always to be fairly optimistic, particularly after the launching of his Unemployment programme; yet he evidently thought that the impending fight was in the nature of a last throw for the Liberal Party. When the question arose of spending a large sum of money out of the Fund upon a poster campaign, he said:

"We must make the best of this opportunity. It may be our last chance; if we don't do well this time we may be done for as a party."

At the time he was examining suggested posters at his house in Addison Road, Kensington, where he had given a luncheon party to his confreres so that they might give their opinion on the choice of these posters. Sir Herbert Samuel was there, Dr. Macnamara, Sir William Edge, Dr. Hunter, Director of the Liberal Campaign Department, Colonel Tweed, L. J. Humphrey, Director of Publicity, myself, and several others. Humphrey and I had produced a good many suggested posters, and after lunch the party sat in a semi-circle in the drawing-room while we displayed poster after poster in front of the fire. Thus was the pictorial propaganda of the Party settled. At that time Lloyd George's favourite poster was one that depicted him standing with outstretched arms upon a background, on one side, of busy factories in 1930, on the other, of munition workers producing shells in 1916. "He provided shells in time of need; he can provide work for the unemployed now," was the theme. Certain people of malicious mind attributed his enthusiasm for this poster to the artist's conception of him dressed in a slim, boyish double-breasted suit; but actually he liked it because of its balance of past achievement with promise of the future. It showed an imagined future in terms of a past

success. If there is one achievement by which Lloyd George desires to be remembered, it is his production of munitions at a time when the British forces were endangered by the lack of them.

SECOND CHAPTER

CRANKS, CROOKS AND LUNATICS: LLOYD GEORGE'S GUARDIAN: THE MAN FROM MOROCCO: A POLITICAL JOAN OF ARC: AERIAL FANTASY: THE CROOKED COUNT: DANGEROUS CANDIDATES: SECRETS FOR SALE.

It is well known that one of the disadvantages suffered by men of great personality lies in the attraction they have for persons of abnormal mind. Those who by reason of their activities are constantly in view of that myopic orb, the "public eye," are invariably the targets for the unwelcome attentions, the fads and fancies, and the futile aspirations of cranks and lunatics. It is fortunate, however, that these great personalities are generally in the position of being able to escape the attentions of cranks and lunatics by erecting between themselves and their persecutors a protective barrier of adherents. So unsurmountable are those barriers, and so well

are they manned, and so quietly are the fanatical besiegers diverted, that the great ones are seldom aware of one-tenth a part of the multitudinous minor flutterings around the candle of their fame.

Lloyd George was no exception to this rule during the rather hectic months that preceded the General Election of May, 1929. He was of course conscious—none more so—of the political assaults and underground sappings of co-politicians: these things are the stuff of which politics are made. But he knew little or nothing of the minor assaults that were made upon Liberal headquarters by the unbalanced people whom he attracted during those lively days, when his name was upon everybody's lips.

He could not know, for he was too well guarded. And, in common with other leaders of other parties, his guard began at Scotland Yard. Those who have seen him at public meetings may have observed that he was invariably attended by a slim, rather pale man, quietly dressed, a man with quick, watchful brown eyes. Pavey, of the Criminal Investigation Department, does not fit the popular conception of a plain-clothes detective; he has the appearance rather of an "indoor" man. But Pavey is an athlete, a boxer, an expert in ju-

jitsu, and he has muscles of steel. In a small hut at Churt which was always at his disposal when "L.G." was in residence, Pavey housed a veritable training quarters—boxing gloves, punch-ball, Indian clubs, and all the equipment of the man who keeps himself fit for any physical emergency. This pale young man of the C.I.D. accompanied the Liberal chief everywhere, by order of Scotland Yard: he was a permanent attachment to the Liberal entourage. Lloyd George had no particular desire for protection, but his position as a Party leader was in the eyes of Scotland Yard sufficient to warrant the perpetual presence of a detective. When Lloyd George went to Churt, Pavey was always in the front of the car; when Lloyd George slept at Churt, Pavey was always in his hut beside Bron-y-de, with a pair of lynx-eared dogs close by that set up a savage clamour at the slightest unusual sound; and when Lloyd George was at headquarters, Pavey might always be seen in the entrance hall.

Pavey was only the first of the barriers that stood between Lloyd George and the unwelcome attentions of the tide of fanatics that was always surging round the Liberal leader. The second barrier was, and is still, A. J. Sylvester, Lloyd George's Chief Secretary, who spent his life in

putting into practice a kind of policy of disarmament upon all who endeavoured to assail the peace of his lord and master. Sylvester was the most faithful of all Lloyd George's protectors, the most admiring, and the most hard worked in consequence. He spent half his days receiving fanatics who for some reason or other were anxious to "get at" Lloyd George. His invariable policy was to meet them with an excitable heartiness and an encouraging smile, and to dispose of them in an excess of excitability which gave them the impression that the earth was turning at double its normal speed in consequence of their visit.

But Sylvester encountered only a small proportion of the fanatics—and usually these were the more influential of the crowd. The less influential found their way to other departments, generally the publicity department. It was the publicity department that bore the main assault, particularly during the months preceding the general election; it became, as the election drew near, a kind of depository for an inexhaustible supply of cranks and lunatics. Cranks with every kind of bee in their bonnets; lunatics obsessed by every conceivable fancy; crooks inspired by the most absurd ideas for placing Lloyd George in power again, and incidentally

for securing a little on account for themselves. I have not kept a full record of the number of people of these types who passed through my hands, but they amounted to several hundreds; and not one of them had anything in the way of genuine help to offer; each was seeking self-aggrandisement or self-enrichment.

Of the fanatics who haunted the Liberal headquarters one of the most persistent was the Man from Morocco. I first made his acquaintance one morning some six weeks before the election, when Smith, the soft-footed and discreet guardian of the front door, knocked and entered the room.

"There's a—gentleman to see Mr. Lloyd George, sir," he said.

I knew the meaning of the pause in his sentence. Smith has been long in the service of politicians, and he has learned among other things the art of implying criticism without taking the liberty of expressing it in words.

"What kind of a gentleman?" I asked him.

"Rather an unusual gentleman, sir. No collar, open shirt, longish hair, and says he's walked from Morocco. Mr. Sylvester's away."

The description was a gem of its kind. Without a single derogatory word, it yet contained

the most vivid implication of crankiness that I had ever heard. And the final words indicated that the visitor was not only a crank, but a crank who had not sufficient influence to passport him to higher quarters.

As it was my business to deal with uninfluential lunatics, I told Smith to send him in. When he entered I saw that the commissionaire's implication had not been without reason. He was a tall, strong-looking man, perhaps thirty-eight years of age, with the burning bright eyes of a fanatic. His hair was frizzy and yellow, and "longish" was the correct description; it was scraped back from a high forehead, and shot out at the back of his head like a tangle of wires. He had no hat. His collarless shirt was open v-shaped half-way down his pallid chest. His clothes were shabby, his trousers too short. He carried a bundle of papers under his arm. He came into the room with a swift, lithe step, but stopped and scowled when he saw me rise to greet him.

"I was expecting," he said haughtily, "to see Lloyd George."

I replied that he was not available at the moment: his time was so much taken up with meetings and speeches that he was unfortunately not able to receive all the visitors he would like

to receive had circumstances been different.

"But my visit is extremely important," he answered testily. "It is imperative that I should see him."

I indicated, regretfully, that in the circumstances a personal interview was out of the question, adding that I would bring to Mr. Lloyd George's attention any matter in which he was interested.

"*You* can do nothing," he said, pacing the room. "I must see him. They continually try to put me off." And then, staring at me piercingly with deep, bright eyes, he added, "I have walked all the way from Morocco to see him, and I shall." And he sat down.

I sympathised with him over his long walk. I talked to him pleasantly. I reasoned with him, emphasising Mr. Lloyd George's extreme busyness, and telling him that if he wished to help he would entrust his message to me so that it might be put to the Liberal chief at the right moment. He was adamant at first in refusing my offer, but after a while he began to unbend.

"If I tell you," he said, "I must insist that I see him after he has considered the matter."

I assured him that I would do my best to procure an interview.

He stared at me broodingly for a moment. Then suddenly he seized the front of his shirt with one hand and tore it apart to the full extent of the opening, revealing half-a-dozen purplish wealds across the lower part of his chest. Although in the Liberal Party one was innured to surprises, I must confess that I was momentarily shaken out of my accustomed calm. I was also repelled: I did not consider it a part of my work to inspect lacerations on the hairy chests of complete strangers.

The revelation of his disfigurement seemed to stir the man to fury. His eyes grew wilder, and he began to declaim passionately, leaning towards me until I could smell his stomachy breath.

"The French did that for me," he almost shouted. "Lloyd George hates the French, doesn't he? Hates them, despises them. The beasts. They did this to me—in Morocco, in the Foreign Legion, three months ago. They're doing it to scores of other Englishmen too. Every day. Worse things. If Lloyd George knew the truth and told it, he could win the election on it. Sweep the country." (Everybody who had an idea or suggestion was sure that it would "sweep the country.") "I want to help him do it. I *can* help him." Then came his

suggestion. "I want him to take me round with him to his meetings, speak on this subject, and let me show the audience what the French did to *me*," he thumped his chest, "what they're doing to hundreds of other Englishmen."

My mind manufactured a ludicrous picture of Lloyd George on a platform, his white hair ruffling in the breeze, reaching his crescendo of passionate indignation, and suddenly producing before the avid multitude a hairy and lacerated human chest in an effort to return the Liberal Party to power.

The man ranted on for some minutes, gradually calming as his passion spent itself; and at last, by giving him all my sympathy and assuring him that Mr. Lloyd George's attention would be drawn to the matter, I induced him to leave. After this visit he pestered headquarters continuously. He was denied entry, so he used to hang about the street, with his bundle of mysterious papers under his arm, waiting for Lloyd George to arrive. Fortunately the two never met; but if they had done so—well, Pavey was ready for any emergency. I had inquiries made about the man, and ascertained that he had never been in Morocco, nor in the Foreign Legion; he was an out-of-work clerk living in Rowton House. He was not known to have

been in the war; his lacerations possibly were self-inflicted for the purpose of winning political sympathy and gaining notoriety for himself. After pestering headquarters for a few weeks he grew tired; and the last time I saw him he was exhibiting his chest to a tall policeman on duty at the bottom of Parliament Street—one of those policemen who always stop the traffic when an eminent politician desires to cross to the House. When he had gone, I asked the officer what the man wanted. The officer jerked his head in the direction of Palace Chambers, the Conservative headquarters.

"Gone to show 'is chest to the Prime Minister," he replied, waving on a couple of buses. Clearly the man had changed his allegiance!

The personality and appearance of Lloyd George, combined with the publicity he received, seemed to have a peculiar fascination for women. Many wrote him letters of intense admiration, and made him unqualified offers of their services. They called at headquarters in the hope of seeing him, and sometimes they posed as women journalists seeking interviews in the belief that they would thereby gain access to him. One rather persistent moth, a religious fanatic, expressed her conviction that he was the Messiah, come to save not merely Liberalism, but the world. She

asked me to join her in prayer for the success of Lloyd George. I declined, on the ground that I had a committee meeting to attend. God waits, but committees grow impatient.

There was another woman admirer who believed herself to be a modern Joan of Arc. She had visions of herself leading the Party to victory, with Lloyd George at her right hand. She first gained access to me on the ground that she was possessed of some important information; and it was not policy to refuse an audience to anybody who might have something to offer that could conceivably be of assistance in the campaign. She was a frail, gentle-looking woman of forty-five, a widow of some substance, who dressed with an effect of silver-grey, in a kind of enlivened Quakerish garb. She was placid enough until in conversation she reached the subject of her mission; then her eyes became suffused with the glow of fanaticism, and she startled me by striking an attitude and declaiming dramatically:

"I want to go out into the streets and byways with him and cry 'Women of Britain, arise—follow the banner that Lloyd George has unfurled before you, follow in his footsteps in the path that leads to freedom, better homes, purer living.'"

Then she waved her arms vaguely and continued her declamation in words which showed only too well that she had been absorbing the catch-phrases prevalent in current election literature.

I was impressed more than once by the way in which political events gave birth to fantastic ideas in the minds of the deranged. One of the most extreme cases I discovered in a woman who produced a "plan" of a strange-looking aeroplane. It was roughly drawn, had four tiers of wings, and a dozen swirling eddies of ink to indicate the presence of a dozen propellers. After stating that she was an "admirer" and wished to help Lloyd George, she intimated that the purpose of her aeroplane—which could very easily be built by five thousand of the unemployed, thereby aiding the Liberal Unemployment Scheme—was to carry ten thousand Jews at a time back to Palestine. After it had served this purpose, the machine could be utilised in the cause of Free Trade, for carrying merchandise, or for taking Mr. Lloyd George to his meetings in the country. The rambling, incoherent proposition was the more ludicrous since it was expounded quietly and seriously by one who was in appearance a normal, well-to-do middle-class woman. Hers was a clear case of mental de-

rangement. Her visit occurred a few days after a famous passage of words between Lloyd George and Lord Melchett had received much publicity in the press; and it was clear to me that the enmity between these two had given birth in her disordered mind to this fantastic notion for removing ten thousand Jews at a time out of Britain. Presumably one of the first ten thousand to use the aeroplane would have been Lord Melchett.

My policy in all cases of harmless insanity and fanaticism was to show a gradually increasing interest in the suggestion put forward, and to dispose of the visitor by promising that the matter would most certainly receive Lloyd George's attention. If the visitor left an address I would write, after the lapse of a few days, stating Lloyd George had considered the matter, but, while thanking the visitor for his interesting scheme, he regretted that shortness of time and other factors prevented its realisation in time to be effective for the Election. Usually this policy succeeded. The wandering minds, evidently satisfied that their wild ideas had received some official attention, no doubt rambled off into other mazes of thought, and I received no further calls.

It is a strange thing, the fascination that

politicians exercise over deranged minds. Some years ago I made a visit of inspection to an asylum, and the doctor whose guest I was told me that forty per cent. of the inmates spent part of their time writing letters—which were not, of course, posted—and that twenty-five per cent. of the letters were addressed to politicians and statesmen. One inmate had for many years written a weekly epistle to the late Mr. Gladstone. The doctor, explaining this phenomenon, said that the press publicity given to politicians gave them a special prominence in the minds of lunatics; but I think one must look deeper for the reason. Unbalanced and fanatical minds are usually obsessed by "causes"; the politically famous are likewise invariably fighting for some cause. This similarity of purpose presents a natural attraction for the lunatic and the fanatic, who believe they have a greater chance of assistance from one who apparently is always publicly fighting in some cause than from, say, an actor or a stockbroker, who is fighting only for himself and, unlike the politician, admits it. All the lunatics, as well as the fanatics on the borderline of insanity, who were attracted by the personality of Lloyd George, showed this tendency to regard the party leader as a fellow cause-fighter, as one

who, like themselves, was obsessed by a single purpose.

There was another unfortunate woman whose husband had been killed in the war, but who was convinced that he was being kept a prisoner by Lloyd George because he had once assisted a Labour candidate in a by-election. She begged me to let her see Lloyd George so that she could entreat him to release her husband. My utmost assurances would not convince this poor woman that her husband was not locked in some dark political dungeon; and at last, in an effort to divert her mind from the Liberal Party and its leader, I pointed out that at the period her husband "disappeared" a Coalition Government was in power; that if anybody had imprisoned her husband, it must obviously be the Tory Party, Labour's strongest opponents; the Liberal Party had a great deal of sympathy for the aims of the Labour Party. This reasoning seemed to give her a new conception of the situation; and, coupled with my assurances that we had no political prisoners, it eventually turned her thoughts in the direction of the Conservatives. When she left she asked to be directed to the Tory headquarters.

Often I felt a stirring of conscience at having deliberately to deceive or mislead these unfortu-

nate people who were obsessed by some delusion; but there was no other course open to me. It would have been futile in most instances to attempt to eradicate their obsessions; indeed, in the last case I believe the knowledge that her husband was in fact dead would have broken the woman's heart; her conviction that he was alive, a political prisoner, seemed to be the one thing that sustained her, and her efforts to secure his release formed the one object of her desolate life. But if I could do little to help them to cast out their delusions, I could at least divert their thoughts from Lloyd George; and this I endeavoured to accomplish by practising the most likely subterfuges.

Although conscience may have disturbed me in my dealings with the deranged, it certainly gave me no trouble in my treatment of the crooked. They were at that time almost as plentiful on the fringe of politics as they are in winter on the Riviera. They seemed to be specially attracted by the Liberal Party, mainly because of the apparent prospect it offered of enabling them to dip their thirsty fingers into the fabulous Lloyd George Chest—that inexhaustible box of wealth which the Liberal leader was supposed by some simple and credulous people to keep locked up in a room at headquarters.

The commonest type was that of the man who presented himself, with introductions and credentials, and offered his services—entirely free, of course—as a speaker or organiser. In the last months before the Election it was necessary to engage large numbers of additional helpers, and often enough those who presented themselves were recommended in all good faith by members of the Party who had themselves been well and truly deceived. The average moth of this kind who fluttered round the golden candle usually began by inducing some person in authority to send him to some part of the country as a voluntary organisation helper. He would be satisfied so long as he obtained some authority in writing. Having possessed himself of his credentials, he would play the old, old game of impressing country hotel-keepers and garage proprietors, living in luxury on credit for as long as he could inspire confidence, and then disappearing from the political stage.

There was a charming German "count," a student of politics, a reverent "admirer" of Lloyd George, an altogether pleasant little man, who secured an invitation to a semi-public meeting at the National Liberal Club and made the acquaintance of several minor headquarters officials. Through them he gained access to

headquarters. Of course, he wrote for the chief German journals, was a diplomatic and political correspondent. Within a fortnight that charming little count was being presented to Sir John Simon, Professor Gilbert Murray, and other eminent Liberals, at an Oxford garden party; and at the same time he was supporting himself by borrowing money from some of the lesser Liberals whom he had impressed by his friendship with the upper ten. His real objective was Lloyd George, but he failed to get so far. His measure was taken in time, whereupon he disappeared and was never seen again; nor was the money he had borrowed.

I quote this particular case as an example of the ease with which undesirable people, possessed of what is commonly called "charm," could at times pass the Party watchdogs and reach the eminent ones entirely unsuspected by those who gave them passage.

Another kind of adventurer who came to my notice was the would-be blackmailer who claimed to be the illegitimate son of one of the Party leaders. I had personal experience of one of this unpleasant type, and I had knowledge of others. My own man secured an interview on the ground that he wanted work. After a short conversation he intimated quite pleasantly that

he was the natural son of a certain eminent man in the Party, and that he would shortly be visiting this eminent man's constituency. He made no demands; but he indicated clearly enough that public knowledge of the conditions of his birth would not improve his "parent's" chance in the constituency. I rose decisively and showed him the door, and he passed out without protest, but with a smile that was intended to be pleasantly sinister. He was a thorough impostor, and although a watch was kept for him in the constituency he had mentioned, he naturally was never seen there.

At this period the Party were troubled by unofficial candidates, one or two of whom were extremely dangerous. One of them in particular did Liberalism a good deal of damage in a London constituency where, in the absence of an official nominee—the seat was considered to be not worth contesting—he set himself up as the Party's representative. He pestered headquarters for recognition, both at Abingdon Street, where Sir Herbert Samuel held sway, and at Old Queen Street; he tried in vain to reach Lloyd George. He came to see me, bringing with him an unpleasant woman whose ostensible purpose was to charm me into friendliness, but who succeeded only in repelling me still more than

her male companion had already done. Yet the situation was not without humour. The man, himself a voluble, aggressive fellow, made an excuse to leave me alone with her; whereupon she set herself to ogle and flatter and cajole me in the manner of the most blatant of harlots. The pair were so persistent that I was forced eventually to ask them to leave. They continued their efforts in other directions for some time, and in the meantime had opened committee rooms, engaged helpers, issued posters and literature of their own, and generally succeeded in imposing on a number of the less well-informed Liberals in the constituency.

Suddenly and unexpectedly their activities ceased. I supposed that they had grown tired of fighting a lone battle without support, but another explanation presented itself when the representatives of a periodical devoted to exposing the activities of people too shady to retaliate with writs, called in quest of information of the unofficial candidate's whereabouts. The man had disappeared after imposing on tradesmen, working people, and even local Liberals. He had left behind a trail of debts, unpaid wages, and printing accounts, and had even got away with a large sum of money which he borrowed from a too-trusting Liberal sup-

porter. The various offices of the Party received calls from numbers of people who had been imposed upon by this unpleasant adventurer, but though the police searched, they failed to trace him.

I have been continually surprised at the facility with which obvious adventurers can impose on normally intelligent people, but never more so than in the case of this unofficial candidate. He was so patently a rogue. He had a dark, penetrating eye and the impertinent pertinacity of the born rascal. He lacked the innocence and charm that carried the "count" into higher regions; but his arrogant persistence enabled him to carry off a fairly good thing in a less exalted sphere.

About this period I was annoyed a good deal by men who had secret information to sell—for money in advance—which would enable Lloyd George without fail to perform the pleasing feat of "sweeping the country." One of the most plausible of these efforts was first broached to me on the telephone by a pleasant-voiced "admirer," who had met a man who had some extremely important information which might make all the difference between success and failure at the polls. This man, who bore a military title—always suspicious in matters of this

kind—might be induced to talk if he were approached with discretion. He was not interested in politics, but the admirer, who was inevitably a "lifelong Liberal," felt that it was an opportunity which in the interests of the Great Cause ought not to be allowed to pass. He gave me the address and telephone number of this military gentleman, but declined to indicate the nature of the information on the plea that he was sworn to secrecy.

It seemed to me to be too deliciously mysterious to be genuine; nevertheless, because it was my business to investigate all possible chances, I took the trouble to ring up the mysterious ex-officer. I explained my reasons for approaching him, whereupon he expressed a shade of annoyance (not quite strong enough to be sincere) that anything at all should have been said about the subject. He also intimated that he did not think he was prepared to be dragged into politics, as undoubtedly he would be if he revealed all that was on his mind. In that event, I replied, I would not trouble him further. This attitude seemed to give him cause to change his mind, for he answered, rather too hurriedly, that he might be prepared to reconsider his decision, since he was so great an admirer of Lloyd George. Eventually he agreed to call on me. I knew by

this time that he had nothing to offer worthy of acceptance, but I was curious to hear his proposition.

He proved to be a fairly hard case—a good-looking waster of about forty, a persuasive and forceful talker, well-dressed, very sure of himself. After speaking at some length about the valuable information in his possession, without, however, revealing its nature, he led up to the subject of payment, and intimated with great delicacy that a small sum in advance, say fifty pounds, would unseal his lips and at the same time prove my own good faith. When he discovered that I was completely and incredibly lacking in faith, he reduced the amount to twenty pounds; and when even that sacrifice did not give me faith, he rose as if to go. I also rose. He changed his mind and sat down. I remained standing. Information before payment was my attitude. He regained interest. We would pay for the information if he gave it? Yes, provided it was of value, and was utilised.

I obtained the information, but as I had anticipated, it was useless. It was to the effect that the Labour Party chiefs were secretly planning a great unemployment scheme for the General Election. Now this was amusing. The Liberal Party was also planning its great unem-

ployment scheme, and it was planning it secretly and in a hurry because it had received, several weeks before, secret information of the secret scheme that was being prepared by the Labour Party, and it wanted to get in first. It did get in first, before the Labour Party was ready with its own plans. It was for this reason that the Liberal scheme was announced so long before the Election campaign began in earnest, for the Party organisers realised that they could not afford to wait, and so run the risk of allowing Labour to take the lead.

My friend the captain knew nothing of this, and finally he left me, though not before he had tried to raise a pound for his trouble.

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These are but a few of the curious cases that came directly under my notice during the campaign. Visitors and interviews of this kind grew more numerous as the Election approached. Crooks and people with manias became an intolerable nuisance. Yet it was necessary to consider every case, because I could never be certain that one or other might not have something of importance to reveal, some idea that might prove valuable. In no instance did I

obtain a scrap of useful information from crooked or fanatical visitors. The Party's paid spies were of greater value than a thousand chance informers.

THIRD CHAPTER

DR. MACNAMARA TAKES TEA : COMEDY OF THE EMPTY SHOP : EX-MINISTER'S SENSITIVENESS : DECEIVING POLITICAL COMMITTEES : WOMEN LIBERALS REBEL : THE TRUTH ABOUT A POPULAR NOVELETTE.

One morning shortly after I joined the Liberal organisation I was sitting in my office when the door was flung violently open and there strode in a tall, vigorous man who seemed to be about sixty years of age (actually he was seventy), of ruddy complexion, with grey hair showing from beneath a felt hat pushed to the back of his head. He looked at me, slumped into a chair, glared at a cup and saucer that stood half empty on my table, and in a booming tone that held in it something in the nature of a challenge asked :

"Is there any more of that tea going?"

I replied that there was, and rang for a cup.

"And who are you?" was the visitor's next question.

I told him.

"Oh, I know, I've heard of you," he answered. "Well, I'm Macnamara."

That was my first introduction to the Right Honourable T. J. Macnamara, son of Sergeant Macnamara of the old 47th Regiment; ex-schoolmaster and one-time Minister of Labour in His Majesty's Government.

Macnamara flung himself further back in the chair, tilted his hat even further back to an angle which placed it in imminent danger of falling off entirely, raised his feet and rested them on the corner of my desk, and continued:

"You know, old man, it's the deuce of a job, trying to interest the people in politics nowadays. *I* don't know what's come over 'em. There's no enthusiasm. Nobody seems to care a damn about anything nowadays. What do *you* think?"

Without waiting for the expression of my opinion, he continued his tirade against the listlessness of the British public, adding a series of machine-gun-like comments on the scandal of unemployment, the ineptitude of the Government, the folly of drift, the wonderful qualities of Lloyd George, the mysteriousness of the workings of his mind, and a multitude of sub-

jects before finally he dropped his feet to the floor and went out as abruptly as he had entered.

This unexpected encounter was the beginning of an association that for me was one of the pleasantest in all my wanderings in political life; and Dr. Macnamara remains to me one of the most lovable figures in the Liberal picture. He remains also, in my eyes, one of the few honest and sincere men engaged in the political scramble. There is about him a boisterous downrightness that one rarely finds among those politicians of the class that commonly falls under the heading of "the old school." He is always brusque and loud in manner, entirely without reserve; excessively quick of temper but speedily mollified; and, unlike many other politicians I could name, devoid of malice. For Lloyd George he always harboured an intense admiration which, I fear, was not shared by many of his colleagues in the Party; and he was one of the Liberal leader's loyalest friends. "The Little Man" was his invariable pseudonym for his chief. Often when we were discussing some project upon which Lloyd George had expressed an opinion, Macnamara would say to me: "If the Little Man says so, you can bet your life there's something in it. The way that Little Man's mind works is uncanny . . . Oh yes . . .

George knows what he's up to, even if Heaven doesn't."

Often "Dr. Mac," as he was called by everybody in the organisation, would come booming in to me, crash into a chair, and with the open-heartedness of a child pour out the story of his troubles. He often had troubles: his rather boisterous temperament gave him little peace in political life. Usually they were humorous troubles—the kind that occur to men who are large enough of heart and mind to triumph over obstacles which to lesser men might cause a fall. I remember one in particular that came upon him shortly before the General Election, when he was contesting Walsall. He knew there was little hope of success; he used to sit with me and deplore the constituency's lack of enthusiasm; yet with the knowledge of certain failure he went on with the fight, wearing himself out for the sake of creating an impression, heartening the fainter-hearted candidates, and assisting Lloyd George and "the cause."

During this contest he came to me one afternoon, crashed into a chair in his customary manner and, in the voice of what I believe is called a "bull-man," ejaculated:

"My God, of all the dirty dogs!"

I enquired whether he was referring to me.

He intimated that I would oblige him by not being a fool; and then he explained the reason for his irritation. It seemed that the Conservatives were the dirty dogs, since they had taken a mean advantage of him at Walsall. In that town his main Election Committee Rooms were on the first floor of a building over a shop. Now this shop had fallen vacant, and the owner had approached Dr. Macnamara with an offer of a short "election" lease of the premises, to be used as a show-window for Liberal propaganda. Dr. Macnamara had considered it, but eventually declined the offer with some indignation because he considered the rent exorbitant. I gathered from what he told me that he had expressed his indignation to the landlord's agent in terms that might well be considered Unparliamentary.

"And what do you think they've had the impertinence to do?" he thundered at me. "Why, they've sold it to the Tories, and the Tories have plastered it with their confounded lies and a great picture of Baldwin, telling everybody not to vote for that fellow Macnamara up above. It's making me the laughing stock of the town. I'll get even with 'em somehow."

He was so indignant, so thoroughly upset, that he even refused a cup of tea: a rare occurrence. He went out, slamming the door violently

behind him. I did not see him again for some days; but when I did he was jubilant. His hat was positively hanging on the back of his head.

"I've beaten 'em at *that* game, old man," he roared. "What d'you think I did? Why, I stuck up on the front of *my* premises—above their lying window—a hell of a big pictorial poster of the Little Man, with the inscription: 'Lloyd George—always on top.' What d'you think of that?"

I thought perhaps more than he realised; and my chief thought was this—that when he had the chance to put himself in a very special position above the shop, thereby gaining considerable self-glorification, he had preferred to give the honour to Lloyd George. I wondered how many other fighting politicians would in similar circumstances have made the sacrifice.

There were other moments when Dr. Macnamara's activities were far removed from the humorous. There was about him at times a certain pathos. He had been a Minister of the Crown, had played his part in the affairs of the nation, had given the best part of his life to the country and to his Party; now he was almost outside the political picture. I often had the impression that he was a disappointed man, although he had never given any indication of

his feelings in this matter. But one afternoon, when we were walking across to the House of Commons for a conference with Lloyd George, he lapsed into a state of unaccustomed meditativeness; and suddenly, on an "island" in the middle of Parliament Street, he gripped me by the arm and said, while the traffic thundered round us:

"I *hate* going over to the House. Think of it—for over twenty years I was a Member. For four years I was in the Government. I did what I thought was the right thing, always. Now when I go in they slap me on the back—old friends—and ask me when I'm coming back." Then, slowly and deliberately: "When—am—I—coming—back! Who cares, anyway? You do your best, they accept it, and forget. . . . *Come* on, let's get across while the traffic's clear."

It was the first and last glimpse I ever had of his true feelings towards the short-memoried British public.

Of Dr. Macnamara I have spoken at some length, because I feel the necessity of presenting some sort of a picture of the man who during the months preceding the Election exercised a considerable influence in the councils of the Party. As chairman of a number of committees

his voice was heard in many discussions upon the conduct of the organisation: and often it was a loud and compelling voice, which undoubtedly offended some of the people whose ears it assailed. It was necessary that somebody should have a loud and compelling voice, for political committees are without doubt the most argumentative, time-wasting, and often futile gatherings possible to conceive. And to me it has always been a paradox that the committees of a political party, whose existence is bound up with the excessively serious task of attempting to guide the destinies of a nation, should offer to the unbiassed observer so much unconscious humour. The business of banking, or of universal providing, or of managing a railway, is a serious and important one, yet the activities of those engaged in it are devoid of the humorous element. I think the explanation of this element of comedy behind the closed doors of politics—comedy that often oversteps its bounds and merges into farce—may be found, first in the bigotry and self-sufficiency of the politically-minded: a bigot, himself so often devoid of humour, usually satisfies the laws of compensation by unwittingly providing humour for others; while a self-sufficing man, if not endowed by nature with the qualities that permit self-

sufficiency, is invariably a figure of comedy. Secondly, the humorous side may be accentuated by the comparative inexperience of the lifelong political enthusiast in most matters outside the realm of politics—matters practical and technical. To be inexperienced is not in itself humorous : it becomes so only when inexperienced people attempt to concern themselves in those things in which they are inexperienced, and bring a rabid dogmatism to bear upon all matters, regardless of their competence to handle them. Political organisations unfortunately have more than a fair share of this type of man, who, since nature has endowed him with qualities that have enabled him to become a vigorous and convincing speaker, or a cunning tactician, or a skilful place-hunter, grows to the belief that because he excels in one direction he is competent to excel in all. Hence a political party, in comparison with any other organisation, harbours an undue proportion of incompetence. Hence, too, the element of humour that is seldom absent from its deliberations and activities.

Much of the comedy in the Liberal organisation was to be found in the activities of its committees, the object of whose existence was to speed up the work of organisation and propaganda, but whose deliberations only too fre-

quently delayed achievement until the enthusiasm of those whose work it was to achieve had long since evaporated. These delays would have been even greater but for the brusque vigour of Dr. Macnamara. He would sit at the head of the long mahogany table in the committee room at headquarters, roll himself a shag cigarette, lick down the edge, nip off the trailing ends of tobacco with a slow, thoughtful decisiveness, light it, and say in a great voice:

"Well, now, come on, let's get down to it."

Invariably he swept aside the formalities of committee meetings: his temperament was too hasty to tolerate them. Other committee men and women usually desired to proceed with a flow of orthodoxy, with the "Mr. Chairman and gentlemen," formulas; the chairman preferred to use the language of the clubroom, the "my dear fellow, that's all rot," formula. Yet in spite of the chairman's brusqueness, the committees would often delay matters of urgency, which ought to have been settled immediately and could not be proceeded with unless authorised by them, by the simple process of not attending the meeting. Sometimes the attendance was so small as to preclude even a quorum, and an important decision would have to be deferred until the next meeting a month later. These delays naturally

hindered the work of the organisation, since departmental chiefs could not proceed with new plans of development without the approval of the various committees.

At one time I tried to draw attention to this state of affairs by a parody which was to have been produced at a staff entertainment in the winter of 1928. It was not produced, for the reason that I was unexpectedly asked to go to the United States by Lloyd George to attend the Presidential Election shortly before the entertainment was to have been staged. Yet for the benefit of any members of the committee who may read these pages, I think the parody should here be reproduced. This is the substance of it:

"Sleeping Beauty."

"A Wordless Political Tragedy in One Act."

Scene—Headquarters Committee Room.

Time—Eleven a.m.

The table is set out with paper, pencils, and surrounded by chairs in readiness for meeting. On wall, back stage, a large cardboard clock-dial, also several famous Liberal slogans, including "Peace, Retrenchment, Reform,"

"Wait and See," and "We can Conquer Unemployment."

Enter a member of the committee. Looks at clock, takes seat at table, facing audience, picks up agenda and studies it for thirty seconds. Glances at clock, the hands of which begin to move slowly round. Committeeman continues to read.

Hands of clock gather speed and soon are racing round the dial. Committeeman grows drowsy, nods, pulls himself together, nods again, and in an effort to keep awake raises agenda papers in order to concentrate on them, thereby concealing his face. Soon his hands begin to droop, and when his face is again visible he is seen to have grown a long white beard. He looks round the room, but, observing that he is still alone, nods off to sleep again.

From above, part of a large cobweb, made of rope, is slowly lowered, half covering the committee table. Another part of the cobweb follows until the whole committee room is seen through the meshes of a gigantic web. Committeeman snores.

Door, back-stage, opens and charwoman enters with bucket and mop, and, muttering to herself, proceeds with business of clearing up

room, sweeping aside cobweb, etc. Awakened by rattle of bucket, committeeman, still wearing white beard, starts up, puts hand to back in an "every-picture-tells-a-story" gesture, takes up a pair of sticks, and hobbles out, an old man. Hands of clock race round the dial, signifying the rapid passage of precious time. Curtain falls on charwoman sweeping dust off the slogan "Wait and See."

I had always deplored the futility of the committee method of organisation, and had fumed and chafed against the restrictions it placed upon the activities of the organisers. My conviction that the method was entirely wrong was confirmed later by my visit to the United States, where I found that each branch of the two political organisations was in charge of one man who was more or less an autocrat in his own sphere, and suffered not at all from the interference of committees. A political party, fighting for its existence, cannot be committee-ruled with success: the method is too cumbersome and dilatory. Many of the muddles in which the Liberal organisation became involved as the General Election approached were directly due to the slowness of the committees. After my American experience I was able to emphasise the

need for a simplification of method in my report to Lloyd George; and towards the end of the fight the committees were in fact swept aside; though chiefly for the reason that most of their members were absent on " active service " rather than because there was any definite change of policy. The average politician finds it difficult to conceive any other method of procedure.

Yet it was always possible to evade the restrictions imposed by committee-rule by ignoring the wishes of the committees; and this policy most of the departmental chiefs adopted with excellent results. The committees were seldom the wiser: a further proof, to my mind, of their futility.

As an example of the manner in which committees would interfere in matters they did not understand, I may instance the controversy that was roused over a certain original piece of propaganda that was published and circulated by the Campaign Department. It took the form of a twopenny story-book entitled " Her Decision," of the type read by mill-girls, kitchen maids, and other young women of romantic nature but not too selective mentality. It was, to all appearances, a feminine equivalent of the schoolboys' " blood and thunder " novelette: a work of lurid and sentimental romance, containing the inevitable fair-haired heroine, staunch blue-eyed hero,

and monocled, brilliantined villain, whose adventures in love and well-diluted passion are read nowadays by hundreds of thousands of young women who, as voters, are erroneously supposed to have the destiny of the nation in their hands. Now this novelette was cunningly contrived; for the heroine was a young woman with a vote, the staunch hero was a Liberal, the villain—vile wretch!—was a Tory who wore a monocle; and somewhere an unpleasant subsidiary villain, a Socialist, periodically emerged from a tumult of trouble which he had created by his own wrong-headedness. These four characters were involved, during the course of some thirty thousand words, in the sort of harrowing adventures in which their kind invariably do become involved: the Tory villain made himself thoroughly unpopular, the Liberal hero won his halo and saved the heroine both from death and from what would have been worse than death—the unholy kisses of the Tory villain; and all ended happily with the hero crushing the heroine to him and whispering sweet inevitabilities into her ear. Interwoven into this romance were subtle pieces of pro-Liberal, anti-Conservative and anti-Socialist propaganda, a faint but persuasive Liberal bias, and an atmosphere of general elections—though these were not strong enough to

spoil the story. I defy any impressionable young woman of the class for which it was intended to read the novelette without receiving a bias in favour of Liberalism and her local Liberal candidate.

Printed and circulated, it met with instant success. Agents in industrial areas wrote and telegraphed for further supplies. Sir Charles Starmer, a member of one of my committees and a candidate in the North, repeated, and again repeated his order for supplies, saying "it was just the stuff for mill-girl voters"—and Sir Charles, by virtue of being an extensive and successful proprietor of popular newspapers, may be considered to possess sound judgment.

Then came the hitch. A peremptory document arrived at headquarters from the Women's National Liberal Federation, asking that the publication should be withdrawn. A committee of distinguished women Liberals had met to discuss this unusual piece of propaganda, and had decided that it was degrading to politics, that it lowered the status of Liberalism, and insulted the intelligence of women voters. They were intensely annoyed. Their protest was signed by a number of distinguished women in the Party, including Lady Acland. They had, of course, quite failed to grasp the purpose

of the novelette; and in this failure they revealed once again the lamentable fact that they were out of touch with the minds of a vast proportion of the feminine electorate. The young women for whom this story had been prepared had for months been exemplifying their disinclination to take the slightest interest in matters political; they cared not a jot for their new enfranchisement, and it was unlikely that more than twenty per cent. of them would go to the trouble of using their vote. There were few enough channels through which they could be approached; and this type of propaganda—an adaptation to the circumstances—was one of them.

But the Women Liberals' committee would have none of it. The truth was that they were trying to reach the kitchen and the loom with the language and ideas of a Girton debating society. They were trying to instill high ethical standards into their politics. I appreciated the fineness of their ideals; but the immediate necessity was to win the votes of these girls and women, not to educate them up to one's own standards. Political education could come later; at that period political bias was the Party's need. I made an attempt to argue with the Women Liberals, but in vain. We could not openly flout

their wishes; but the novelettes were so greatly in demand by political agents that we could not in wisdom suppress the publication. There was only one possible and safe procedure—to delay the reply to the Women's Federation, and in the meantime to rush out as many thousands of novelettes as possible. The Women's Committee was then informed that, in deference to its wishes, the circulation would be stopped. This enabled the Campaign Department to dispose of the greater part of its popular novelettes without offending the Federation.

It is one of the characteristics of women that they are even more conservative than men in their political outlook. This is the more surprising since they are newcomers in political life: one would in consequence have expected of them a more adventurous spirit, a greater enthusiasm for experiment. The puppy is always ready to venture where the staid and experienced dog draws back. But in politics the feminine puppy is too much inclined to remain close to the basket where it was born.

In politics, too, women lack that sense of humour which might carry them into fields of conquest. They take themselves and their mission with such deadly seriousness that the inevitable reaction is for others to be unable to

accept them and their missions at the same valuation. We cannot to-day, as in the past, impress the vast, half-educated, and partly disillusioned electorate with a political-religious fervour. Yet it is in this manner that the average woman politician of this generation approaches her task, seeing herself as a kind of crusader; while the public, equally out of date, cannot rid itself of the idea that she is merely an intruder venturing in a sphere that is not her own. Perhaps it is this public attitude towards her that invokes her deadly seriousness, and induces her in self-defence to transform, as a counteraction, every petty political issue into an exaggerated crusade, so brimming with noble aims and sentiments as to be incredible to a cynical modern electorate.

This curious tendency to over-dramatise themselves and their policies was especially apparent among the women of the Liberal Party. One of its manifestations was a profound distaste for any kind of humour in propaganda. Members of the Federation who were on the Campaign Committee frequently lodged protests against the introduction of humour into campaign propaganda. They could not realise that it was often possible to convey political propaganda through humour, and particularly through humorous

illustration, to minds that were unreceptive to serious political arguments. One of their representatives protested vigorously even against a humorous column of anti-Conservative propaganda that was published regularly in three monthly newspapers issued by the Campaign Department and circulated to nearly a million homes in Britain. They declined to have humour in their election literature, insisting that it should be academic in style and express a high-sounding idealism; albeit these qualities were but poor attractions for the hard-worked housewife and the artificial-silk-stockinged factory and office girl who had now become so important a factor in the scramble for votes. The truth is that a belief in high-sounding idealism has in this generation been driven temporarily into a cloistered seclusion.

FOURTH CHAPTER

LLOYD GEORGE LOOKS TO AMERICA : THE U.S. SCHEME : UNPOPULARITY : COMEDY OF TWO TYPISTS : THE SECRET DEPARTURE : PLANS FOR THE BIG TOUR.

On a certain dull, rainy day in mid-September, 1928—the kind of day on which people gaze abstractedly from windows and ponder drearily on the futility of existence—my telephone bell rang and the quiet voice of Colonel Tweed came to me across the wire from Abingdon Street. It was not an unusual occurrence for Colonel Tweed's voice to come across the wire from Abingdon Street; but it was a rare occurrence for his words to surprise me as they then did surprise me. He said :

"Will you hold yourself in readiness to go to the United States next week?"

I replied : "Certainly—but why?"

He answered : "L.G. wants you to study American election methods. Sylvester's going

for one; possibly Belcher (the chief election agent) to look at the organisation side; and you to study propaganda methods. L.G. thinks we may get some ideas that will be useful. I'll let you know something more definite later." And he rang off. . . .

Now at this time the British press was devoting much space to the activities of Mr. "Al" Smith, the energetic and picturesque governor of New York, who was then in the throes of his amazing campaign to capture the Presidency of the United States for the Republican Party. The famous "brown Derby" with which Alfred Smith tried to catch the imagination of the heterogenous American public was well to the fore; and so picturesque and "human" were the activities of the owner of this brown Derby that they had even drawn to him the attention and sympathy of a large section of the British public, which normally takes little interest in American politics. Alfred Smith had also, not unnaturally, attracted the attention of Lloyd George. Nor was this surprising. The two men had many characteristics in common. Both were born showmen, though the American was a child in political subtlety compared with the Welshman —a matter for surprise in view of Smith's connection with Tammany. Both had a flair for

the picturesque. Both had the power of rousing the multitude to a state of tremendous enthusiasm, and of lighting the mass mind temporarily by the use of verbal fireworks. Alfred Smith's oratory was as a soaring rocket that sends out coloured stars and stripes compared with Mr. Hoover's steady, more stolid and earthy Roman candle; and the comparison might well be applied also to Lloyd George's oratory in contrast with that of Stanley Baldwin.

These similarities, combined with the realisation that Alfred Smith was receiving more attention in Britain than Hoover, had not escaped the notice of Lloyd George, and he wished to know more about Smith's methods, and to have first-hand information as to how they differed from Hoover's methods. Hence his sudden decision to send three observers to the United States for the last two months of the Presidential campaign.

There was from the first a good deal of unobtrusive opposition to this scheme. Among certain members of the Liberal organisation there were murmurings against the folly of wasting money on what was regarded as a hair-brained scheme. Men who have spent their lives in politics are the most conservative of beings; they believe that the methods which have been

effective for them for the last thirty or forty years must inevitably continue to be effective until the end of time. We could learn nothing from America, they argued—we who had our politics before America came into existence; and in any case American methods could not be applied to a British election. A few of the doubters expressed their opinions—very mildly—to Lloyd George, but his enthusiasm for his own idea was proof against all protests; and his position as financial dictator, with the purse-strings in his hands, enabled him to have his own way without difficulty.

It was decided that we should sail on the "Mauretania" on the following Friday: this left me only a few days to prepare for a two months absence from London. It was also decided that the visit must be kept a close secret to prevent the other parties from following our example and also sending observers to the States; yet within three days the Labour Party received a report of the project, and a derisive forecast of it was published in a Labour newspaper, which made much of the fact that Lloyd George had found a new way of spending the famous Fund. The Labour Party was usually well-informed on the internal affairs at Liberal headquarters, they had a spy in the building

whom we had never succeeded in tracing, just as we had a spy in their headquarters whom they always failed to trace. A Sunday newspaper also gave prominence to a fantastic story of how three young men were frantically re-stocking their wardrobes before they "dashed" to the United States to learn from Al Smith how Lloyd George ought to organise his election campaign.

But altogether the projected trip received very little prominence. Many enquiries were made at headquarters, but the official reply was that the stories were absurd rumours, the truth being that Sylvester and I were merely taking a long-deferred holiday and had decided to go to the States to renew old friendships there. After the Liberal press had published this explanation, nothing more was said about the matter.

Meanwhile we made hurried preparations for the trip. It was first necessary to gain a thorough knowledge of the American Campaign, the aims of the two parties, the candidates, and the issues; for although I had followed the course of the campaign cursorily in the London press, I had not that full and intimate grasp of its many-sidedness which would be necessary for our investigation. It was impossible to secure that groundwork by reading English reports of the campaign, and I realised that my best plan

would be to study the American press. Hence when our luggage was sent down to Southampton, it was accompanied by an enormous bundle containing two months' issues of the chief American daily and weekly newspapers.

Lloyd George decided that we should take two typists with us. One typist would have been enough, but it was necessary for her to be chaperoned. The alternative of engaging typists in New York was discussed, but it was held to be inadvisable for strange young women in New York to be initiated into the secret of our purpose. Hence two young women were selected from headquarters staff, one for her capabilities as a typist, the other for a reason which I have never been able to decide with certainty. Let me be charitable: she was popular, and I think it was decided that she deserved a change and a sea-trip. The choice stirred an intense excitement and envy among the many young women at headquarters. The two selected girls, one of whom had never been out of England in her life, were here, there and everywhere, buying frocks and hats and cabin trunks with an allowance that was made to them for that purpose out of the Fund.

I must confess to feeling a little apprehensive about the two young women. They were not

particularly good friends; and when you throw together two young women, one attractive and not over-competent, and the other merely very competent, there is always a danger of disruption. But as the matter had been decided by a more sagacious political mind than mine, I did not concern myself too greatly over the arrangement; though later events proved that my apprehensions were justified, and that if I was not too profoundly politically sagacious I was at least wiser in feminine psychology. . . .

On the Friday morning, when the five of us met on the boat-train platform at Waterloo, we found about twenty people from headquarters gathered to "see us off." The platform was crowded, and while we were busy with our personal luggage a press photographer was observed edging his way through the throng. Now the strict injunctions we had received to avoid all publicity on the trip, both at home and in the United States, rendered the appearance of a press photographer particularly obnoxious, and when Sylvester caught the man's eye he turned away apprehensively and entered the compartment to conceal himself. He was ready to fight to the last against being photographed.

But the photographer had no eye for momentous political missions; he was searching for a

musical comedy actress, whose peroxide curls and red, red lips suddenly flashed out from a window a few compartments away. Relief, and yet at the same time a sense of disappointment, that peroxide and rouge should be considered more important than a momentous political mission! When we feared we were on the point of being photographed, we sought to avoid the ordeal; but as soon as we knew that the camera-man was looking for an actress, we resented his neglect! I entered the train, meditating amusedly on the inconsistency of this human nature of ours. . . .

The voyage was busy and uneventful. I had two months of newspapers and periodicals to read through. I formed from my reading a fairly solid groundwork of the American campaign. On the fourth day out, the three of us foregathered and made our plans. There were many points to be taken into consideration. It was necessary, for example, to get well into the farming districts and ascertain what methods the American political organisers utilised in pursuit of the farmer's vote. Lloyd George was particularly keen on the farmers, and if we had returned without first-hand knowledge of this side of the campaign he would in all probability have condemned the report unread, and our

efforts would have been wasted. It would therefore be necessary for us to get outside the cities into the farming country of the North and the Middle West. It would be as necessary also to study the South, where Prohibition had become so momentous an issue; Lloyd George had considerable curiosity about Prohibition in the South, and thought that we might find clues that would give Liberalism a lead on the drink problem and the possibilities of local option. On the other hand we could not neglect the cities and the industrial areas, which were equally important in view of the Industrial Report which the Party had issued some time previously.

Eventually we decided provisionally on the following tour: New York, Washington, Boston, Chicago, Milwaukee, Omaha, Des Moines, Kansas City, Richmond, and Raleigh. By touching these centres, we decided, we would be able to study the various organisation and propaganda methods in the States of New York, Illinois, Columbia, Massachusetts, Wisconsin, Nebraska, Iowa, Missouri, Virginia, and North Carolina: we would thus cover the main sections of the American electorate—city workers, industrial workers, and farmers; we would be able to study practically every phase of the campaign. The complete tour would extend over about 4,500

miles of United States territory.

Our inquiry, we decided, must begin with an examination of all sections of the headquarters organisations of both Republican and Democratic Parties in the chief cities, so that we might ascertain the special general methods by which the two parties approached and influenced the electors. It would then be carried into all sections of the local or state organisations down to the small "precinct" organisations in the cities and the remote areas; and from there into the local committee and registration rooms, thence into the scattered farming districts and the working class areas of the small towns, so that we might observe the effect upon individual electors in their homes of the organisation and propaganda methods which originated at headquarters.

To carry out these plans we would have about six weeks from the time we landed in New York. I realised that it was no easy task, and I prepared myself for several weeks of extremely hard and tiring work by taking as much exercise as possible on the games deck of the "Mauretania." On the second day out the "Mauretania" ran into a violent storm which laid me low for nearly forty-eight hours. Enormous grey seas crashed upon us, each one

seeming momentarily to check the vessel for a few seconds; then she surged on again, unconquerable, but rolling and plunging agonisingly. All of us, with the exception of Sylvester, were incapacitated for two days, but by the fourth day we had all recovered; and when we reached New York we were once more a united, cheerful, and enthusiastic political mission, ready to undertake anything that might assist Lloyd George and the Liberal Party in its effort to return to power.

FIFTH CHAPTER

SECRET EMISSARIES : FIRST INVESTIGATIONS : AMERICA'S POLITICAL METHOD : WINNING WOMEN'S VOTES : SOCIAL FLATTERY : POLITICAL RADIO PARTIES : U.S. OPINION OF LLOYD GEORGE : FIVE MINUTES WITH HOOVER.

We reached New York at nine o'clock in the morning, and made our headquarters on the twenty-second floor of the Hotel Commodore. At two o'clock that afternoon the three of us started out to make preliminary inquiries for the investigation. We had a good many introductions, among them one to Josephus Daniels, former Secretary of the U.S. Navy; but few of the men whom we hoped to meet were in New York. Ex-Secretary Daniels was in Raleigh, North Carolina, editing a newspaper; Dr. Work, chief of the Hoover (Republican) organisation, was in Washington; Herbert Hoover himself was then campaigning in the South; Rascob, the Democratic Chief Organiser, was also out of town.

These absences did not greatly disturb us. I knew that we were not likely to obtain information of great value from the big men. We needed detail, and the leaders of great political organisations are seldom well-informed in detail; but they have a comprehensive grasp of the whole plan of organisation, and it was in this direction that I expected them to be able to assist. For detail it would be necessary to go to the smaller men, the departmental chiefs, and with their connivance and assistance study the methods of each department separately. Yet without the authority of somebody highly-placed in their organisation, it was unlikely that departmental chiefs would give away any of their secrets; it was even conceivable that they would regard us with suspicion and close to us all channels of information. Hence it was necessary that we should make our first move with considerable care.

We received our first introduction to the New York headquarters through Furay, one of the chiefs of the United Press of America. He was a good friend of Lloyd George, for the reason that the United Press then held the world-rights of the Liberal leader's newspaper articles. Furay did us tremendous service. We sat in his room for an hour or more while he talked vigorously

and colourfully about the American campaign; and before we left him that afternoon he had arranged for us to be introduced the next morning into the Republican headquarters as three political students visiting the United States for the purpose of studying political methods. It was necessary thus to camouflage our connection with Lloyd George. If we had gone about our business openly, the New York press would have seen a magnificent " story " in us; the New York correspondents of British newspapers would have cabled the story to London; we would have been continually " written up " and our activities reported in London; and the opposition newspapers in Britain would thoroughly have enjoyed themselves making game of Lloyd George and keeping the British public informed of our efforts to win their votes by studying American methods. Politically, such an exposure might seriously have damaged Liberal chances in many quarters. But by becoming a trio of British students we escaped a great deal of unwelcome attention.

Our first insight into the organisation was given to us by Anthony, the brilliant propagandist chief of the Republican headquarters. We found him in a room littered with newspapers, cartoons, stereos, press photographs, comic

" strips," and all the paraphernalia of an American propagandist's office. He was a vigorous, genial man, courteous, friendly, and very willing to assist us in every possible way.

We spent two days at his headquarters, and two more days at the Democratic headquarters, to which we gained access in the same way. We began to get a good grasp of the fundamentals of American political organisations and propaganda. In the evenings we separated and carried our investigations into the committee rooms and ward organisations in various parts of the city. It was hard work, and the weather—New York was hot, sultry, and full of autumn dust and petrol fumes that hung in the airless streets—was not ideal for our task. The Bowery, where I did a good deal of work, was poisonous in the heat. Nevertheless, by the fifth day we began to feel a certain satisfaction in having achieved at least a comprehensive survey of the general organisation.

The most important fact that emerged was the comparative unimportance of the politician in the practical side of American electioneering. The men who really counted in the two great organisations were the non-political specialists. Some were " big business " men—as in the case of Rascob, who was then head of General

Motors Ltd., the great American car combine. Their subordinate directors, in charge of various sections of the party organisation, were also specialists in their particular sphere of work. American political organisers contend that the politician's work is to formulate policies, but that the methods by which the public are to be induced to accept these policies must be decided by the non-political expert. Expressed commercially, the party factory supplies the goods, but engages proficient salesmen to dispose of them, and expert carriers to deliver them to the public.

The director of an American campaign, although he may have a committee, is an autocrat. He is not committee-ridden. The committee exists to carry out his instructions, not to argue about them and refer them to other committees, thereby causing delay and destroying enthusiasm. The American theory is that political organisers tend blindly to follow tradition, and to organise on hackneyed lines without reference to new conditions and changes in the public taste or feeling. That which was good in the past seems good in the present. On the other hand, they contend that a modern non-political organiser is progressive; he is receptive to new ideas, has a wide outlook. He runs his campaign as he would run a great industry; he

is out to make a profit in votes; and in making that profit he utilises with a minimum of delay every reasonable idea that is presented to him. He is accessible, and he is eager to encourage ideas.

From my earliest connection with the Liberal Party I had maintained, often with some force, that its organisation was hampered, first by having no forceful and autocratic chief of staff; secondly, by the interference of political committees; and thirdly, by many of its departments being in the hands of professional politicians, who in consequence were amateurs in most matters outside politics. The effectiveness of the American system was proof of the value of specialisation by non-political experts. I had seen few things so highly organised, so thoroughly efficient as the election organisations of the two American parties. In comparison with the Liberal election machine, the American was as the Flying Scotsman beside Stephenson's Rocket. My experience of the American machine would give me the opportunity of expressing to Lloyd George my preconceived opinion with as much force as was consistent with good manners. I was glad of the opportunity, for I believed that it might open his eyes to some of the grave defects of his own organisation, into

which he was pouring so much money from the Fund with such inadequate results. In this I had the support of both Sylvester and Belcher. I had scarcely expected Belcher to be in favour of the American system, since he had been a political agent all his life; but he, like myself, was tremendously impressed by the efficiency of the American organisations; he was a broad-minded man, even though a professional politician.

We had further proof of its effectiveness when we reached Washington and met Dr. Hubert Work. He received us at his headquarters with a grave and dignified courtesy. From him we did not conceal our real purpose; and when we had explained our desire and asked his assistance, he sent for his chief lieutenant, introduced us, and said, with his soft drawl:

"These three gentlemen want to see and understand our organisation from top to bottom. I place them in your charge. If there is any closed door they would care to have opened, please open it."

It was in Washington that I had my first clear glimpse of a phase of the campaign in which I was specially interested, since it was so important to us in the forthcoming British elections: I mean the women's organisation and

propaganda. The British electorate of 1929 was to be increased by five million women voters, whom each of the three parties was courting, yet of whose potentialities none was sure. The Liberal Party in particular was puzzled as to how it ought to attract these new women voters. It was trying to approach them through anti-Safeguarding, Better Housing, Child Welfare; it was giving them pamphlets on subjects which were incomprehensible to eighty per cent. of them; it talked with artificial enthusiasm about the eager interest of young women voters in the Liberal cause; but ninety per cent. of these women voters remained supremely and tantalisingly indifferent, and well we all knew it.

Therefore I was glad to meet Mrs. Alvin T. Hert (known to her intimates as " Sally " Hert), farmer, business woman, railroad director, society woman, and Chief Organiser of the Women's Section of the Republican Party. A tall, graceful, vivacious woman, with the sweetest smile I ever saw in America. Although she was involved in a tremendous campaign, she gave us a day of her time, put us in touch with all her departmental chiefs, and enabled me to gain a thorough insight into the women's side of the campaign.

This showed me that in American politics sex

differentiation is less marked than in British politics, and consequently separate organisations are discouraged by women of both parties. There is therefore no movement corresponding to the National Women's Liberal Federation, or the Primrose League. The political parties are taught to organise through united group effort, and judge men and women solely on intellectual or emotional merit. There is more equality and more comradeship between men and women in American politics than in English, and women have their fair share of the honorary offices and paid official positions throughout the State.

The appeal to women was carefully planned, ingeniously organised, and conducted entirely by specialists. The chief of the women's propaganda and publicity section was the editress of a well-known American women's magazine. She had her special staff, which included experienced women reporters; and she was empowered to enlist the services of any well-known woman writer she required.

Her section catered for two distinct types of woman, not for women in general. One class was that of the intelligent, fairly well-to-do, moderately intellectual woman; the other, the unintellectual woman who reads little and has few interests outside the home. The appeal to

the first was semi-intellectual, and to the second emotional. It was realised that the same literature and the same speeches would not interest both types of women; therefore each type had its own literature and speeches.

Wireless talks were given by well-known women accustomed to making appeals to their own sex; by practical women, noted welfare workers, and the wives of well-known farmers who understand a farm woman's reactions. Often the talks were not concerned with heavy political subjects. They were "politics-made-human." The candidate and the party were humanised; their past work for women, for children, for education, and the effect of their policy on the husband's temper, on the child's health, on the purse, on the kitchen and the cradle, formed the subjects of these talks. Every psychological device likely to influence the feminine mind was brought to bear on the emotional side. It was recognised that, to the multitude of new middle-class women voters, politics were a vague, formless thing—the special hobby of men. Only by humanising and emotionalising the subject could any interest be stirred among women. Most of the pamphlets intended for women aimed to give, not a big and comprehensive view of a policy, but a simple and

if possible localised explanation of its effects on a woman's life. All pamphlets, whether for men or women, were infused with as great a sense of intimacy and "chattiness" as possible.

The Women's Section also made a speciality of organised "social flattery." One of the most effective schemes of this kind was conducted through the post. It emanated from local or State Headquarters, not from National Headquarters. Throughout the State Headquarters of the country it was arranged that the social leaders of each district should each write fifty or a hundred letters to a selected list of local women residents, urging them to vote for the party, asking them to write to their friends, and to ask those friends to do the same with other friends. These letters were couched in a friendly style; they emphasised the personal charm and integrity of the candidate; they pointed out how important his policy is to the welfare, not only of the country, but of the writer herself. They contained such phrases as "we women," thereby identifying the upper and lower class women with each other. They made, in short, a friendly and flattering appeal. They were sent to women who might be considered to be on a social grade lower than that of the writers, and who were thereby flattered to receive a friendly personal

communication from one who hitherto had been to them no more than a name in the social columns of the local newspapers. Many of the recipients replied and promised to work for the candidate and his party—and did so, in the hope of thereby gaining an entrance to the social circle of their communicant. Schemes of this kind had a marked effect on the women it reached. In Massachusetts alone it is estimated that by the date of the ballot some 100,000 letters had been sent out to the women of that State.

The organisers of the women's section also established an elaborate chain of women "radio hostesses," whose work consisted of organising wireless parties for women whose political persuasion was in doubt. The system operated throughout every State, originating at National Headquarters in Washington, through State Headquarters and down to the local Sectional Headquarters. Whenever any matter of general political interest to women was to be broadcast, Sectional Headquarters were notified through State Headquarters, and the Radio Hostesses were informed by wire or telephone. These hostesses then sent out invitations to ten or twenty carefully selected women of their acquaintance whose political leaning was uncertain.

The guests were suitably entertained and heard a radio talk which had been specially prepared for the purpose of swaying the doubtful mind. If possible, the Radio Hostesses invite women who were considered to be on a slightly lower social level than their hostesses, thus again influencing by flattery. In Chicago alone there are more than 1,000 Radio Hostesses.

These were but a few of the many subtle devices practised by each of the opposing parties. The appeal to the women voters was always tremendously personal, subtly flattering and psychologically planned to catch every phase of feminine interest in every conceivable way. The very literature was emotionalised to the level of mill-girl and kitchen literature. Yet back in England we were still trying to attract mill-girls with the literature that could appeal only to the intellectual; we were trying to win over servant girls and navvies' wives with incomprehensible booklets about Free Trade and Tariffs. We spoke in the ladylike and pseudo-intellectual language of the *salon* instead of descending the stairs and talking in the language of the kitchen. The truth was that our organisers' minds were as remote from the minds of the five million women voters as Everest's peak is from the crown of Snowdon.

In election literature generally it was obvious that we were thoroughly out of date in comparison with American literature. American publicists had taken cognisance of an important development in social life which we had ignored. They realised that the vast increase in the popular vote had rendered necessary a change in the style and quality of election literature, which now had to be reduced to the level of the popular vote. Moreover, the present vast output of cheap novels, popular newspapers and magazines had made the semi-educated democracy less inclined to read serious and heavy political pamphlets. Nor had they the time : the greater stress and speed of modern life, added to the craze for pleasure and the facilities for obtaining it, precluded them from reading more than a certain limited amount. This amount must entertain. The people demanded to be entertained and interested; and their mentality was such that they would read nothing which did not entertain and interest. In the past the majority of the lower middle class had so little to interest them that a political campaign was a diversion; to-day they had so much to interest and amuse them that politics was to the majority only an intrusion. American political organisers were quick to seize upon this important change in the public habit and attitude

of mind. They did not attempt to break down the barrier and to force upon the public something which the public did not want; instead, they adapted their methods to the changed public taste. In the words of ex-Senator William Hill, the publisher, who was generally held to be one of the astutest political organisers in the Hoover campaign: "We are not Canutes. You can't stop the growth of mental change and habit. It just goes on, and you have to follow it, play up to it and take full advantage of it." It was for this reason that the political organisers engaged non-political specialists to advise them and direct their efforts.

The manner in which they adapted their methods to these new and inevitable conditions were various; but they all centred upon the one essential: catch the interest first, wrap the policy up, and give it to the public like a pill. They had been quick to observe the present-day interest in personalities; they pointed to the demand for biographies and the popularity of the social gossip features in newspapers, in which the lives and doings of well-known people are briefly recorded day by day. This interest in personalities, particularly among the new women electors, who at their present stage of political development are said to be largely influ-

enced by personalities, was revealed in a score of ways; and the way in which it was catered for was shown in the election pamphlets, which described the lives, habits, past achievements and struggles of their candidates. Fully half the pamphlets and leaflets dealt in this way with the candidates, both presidential and senatorial. Policy was wrapped up in the personality of the candidate, who was made a human being first, and a politician second. Election literature had become a skilful blending of "human" interest and policy.

In carrying out this conception the Americans attached the utmost value to the pictorial side of pamphleteering. People who can't be bothered to read will always be attracted by pictures. Most of the "personality" pamphlets were illustrated, not with the mere faces of candidates, but with "human interest" and "action" photographs. They showed the candidate doing something intimate and "human"—perhaps with his family at home, thereby creating a family interest and revealing him as an ideal family man; or directing work on his farm, thereby conveying the suggestion to farmers that as a practical farmer he must know a good deal about the farming conditions of which he so glibly spoke; or tampering with machinery in his factory,

thereby showing that his interest in industrial conditions was a real interest.

And pictorial pamphleteering was carried much further than this. One of the most original pamphlets of the Republicans was a pictorial "life of a great American." It consisted of a series of illustrations in which the life of Herbert Hoover and the policy he represented were skilfully blended. Under each illustration was a two-line description or caption. It was crude; but it was intended for crude minds. Its purpose, like that of the modern picture newspaper, was to cater for and attract the eye of that section of the public which will not be bothered to read seriously. Justification of this method may be found in the success of the pamphlet all over the United States: the demand for it was four times as great as the demand for any other pamphlet in the campaign. Incidentally it may be mentioned that Mr. Hoover objected to this pamphlet, but was over-ruled by his non-political propaganda director—an excellent proof of the wisdom of entrusting the conduct of political campaigns to practical experts.

In addition to this "personality and policy" literature there were of course the more solid pamphlets dealing entirely with policy. They

were simple, lucid and forceful; seldom dull, for the reason that they were written by professional writers and not by politicians. The organisers of both parties declined to have pamphlets written by professional politicians; authors must be professional writers first and politicians second. It was contended that professional writers could infuse more interest into political matters than could politicians, because their livelihood and fame depend on their ability to interest the public in their writings.

Pamphlets on the various definite policies appeared under the names of non-political men and women whose occupation and position gave them authority to speak to a wide and eager public. A pamphlet on " America's Duty to her War Veterans," embodying an important phase of policy calculated to influence the feelings of the people, was written by General Allen, a well-known U.S. soldier; another, " In Defence of Religious Liberty," and covering one of the most important issues of the campaign, appeared under the name of a famous Divine; a lucid explanation of Hoover's farm policy, in which policy was blended with the Republican Leader's personality, was written by I. R. Howard, well known as a former President of the American Farm Bureau Federation. The names upon all

these pamphlets were carefully chosen, with due consideration for the psychological effect they would have on the particular group or groups of people to whom the policy was to appeal. It was contended that, while many modern electors were sceptical of the policies and promises of a politician, they could be won over by non-political men. Our observations among the electorate, specially among the farmers, showed that this policy was justified by the interest that was displayed in this type of literature. The plan conformed to the theory which underlay most of the propaganda in the campaign—namely, that the advertised support of a non-political public man was more valuable, and often influenced more voters, than the promises of a professional politician. American political organisers contended that the semi-educated democracy has never before had so little faith in politicians as to-day.

We concluded our headquarters investigation in Washington with the assistance of many of Mr. Hoover's most valued supporters. Everywhere we were received with the most charming courtesy by these delightful Republicans, who, even when they were ignorant of our connection with Lloyd George, would give whole days of their busy lives to helping us. Mrs. Borah, wife

of Senator Borah, was tremendously enthusiastic about our mission; and everybody who knew its true purpose seemed to be intensely flattered to know that Lloyd George was studying American methods with the object of improving his own by the comparison. In Washington, as in every other part of the United States that we visited, we found him to be extremely popular. He still stood in the esteem of Americans where he had stood at the end of the war; and a great many educated Americans were convinced that he would be returned to power.

From Washington we returned to New York, and while we were preparing for our journey north and west I made a flying visit to Boston to see Herbert Hoover, the Republican candidate for the Presidency. He had touched Boston in the course of his campaign tour, and as he intended to go south almost immediately, this was my only opportunity to meet him. He was speaking that night in a big hall, to which I made my way when I arrived at Boston at six o'clock. I had obtained in New York a letter of introduction and an admission pass for the meeting, but even so I found some difficulty in entering the place, so dense were the crowds round the building. The roof was thick with

loud-speakers. A continuous stream of cars was driving up to the entrance, bearing the elite of Boston to this great function. By doing my best to look like one of the elite, I at last gained access to the platform. The elite were all around me, many of them very conscious of their impending meeting with a possible future President.

Hoover, when he entered, had a tremendous ovation; the cheering was continuous for five minutes. He spoke with a slow deliberateness in reasoned, unimpassioned sentences, without any of the flambuoyant rhetoric of Al. Smith. The burden of his appeal was "prosperity"; and the combination of this appeal with the slow deliberateness of his manner seemed to make the man a tower of strength. I realised then that the flambuoyancy of Alfred Smith, popular though it undoubtedly was, could never attract the prosperity-mad American public as would the steady reliability of Herbert Hoover. Hoover was the rock, Smith the quicksand.

At the close of the meeting, when the clamour had ended, I succeeded in getting a five-minutes' talk with Hoover. The information he gave me was of a general character: he knew comparatively little about the kind of detail I required. He displayed a good deal of interest in my

mission, and when, amid the fluttering and hovering of the elite, he shook hands and we parted, he said with his slow, steady "prosperity" smile:

"I wish you success—and your Chief. Please give my regards to him when you return."

SIXTH CHAPTER

THE SPIRIT OF TAMMANY: "TOUGH BABY": GRAFT AND GUNMEN: UNHAPPY FARMERS: CATTLE AND COCKROACHES: THE FEMALE PHENOMENON: LEWD ENTERTAINMENT: ECHOES OF LADY ASTOR: MUSHROOM MILLIONAIRES: END OF THE QUEST.

It was in Chicago, that teeming, dynamic, brutal terminus city of the Middle West, that I found more entertainment than I had ever expected to find in the course of a political investigation. It began in the Democratic Headquarters, which were situated in one of Chicago's vast hotels. American politicians make a habit of engaging several floors of an hotel to house their organisations, and in Chicago the Democratic party occupied at least two extensive floors.

When I entered I thought at first that I had strayed by mistake into a reception for dis-

charged convicts. I was caught up into a human whirlpool consisting of about a hundred of the most rascally-looking toughs I had ever seen gathered together. There were faces cunning, faces brutal, faces cringing, faces sly and grim and cruel, faces laughing idiotically and smiling saturninely. It was my first real glimpse of the spirit of Tammany in Chicago.

The owners of these faces were packed in a small hall, awaiting their chance to gain an entry to various departments, for various reasons. Some wanted jobs, some were grafters, some were workers engaged outside headquarters, some merely pick-pockets in the pursuit of their calling. Pulling my overcoat closely about me, and with my hands well pressed down into my pockets, I tried to edge through the throng ; whereupon an overdressed ruffian gleamed little pig-eyes at me and said loudly, so that his voice could be heard above the clamour of talk :

" Say, dis swell guy mus' be Al himself, I guess. Yew got a passport right troo de crowd, I reckon, honey ? Cause if yew ain't, keep off dis baby's toes, see ? "

I saw ; especially as his words drew upon me the attention of several other tough-looking gentlemen who appeared to be cronies of this

rather large and flashy baby. Observing that I was a stranger, they were prepared to be playful at my expense; and as I had no wish to figure in a Chicago gunning affair, I withdrew with as much dignity as I could assume, endeavouring still to uphold the Liberal banner. I went to the hotel bureau and inquired whether there was any other approach to the man I wished to see, whereupon the hotel authorities led me by devious ways to a small and secret back staircase, which I mounted to the Presence.

The Presence was, not unnaturally, a Mr. O'Brien: Tammany is full of O'Brien's. A good Democratic name; and the bearer of it was a good Democratic product; gigantic, genial, tough, Irish-American. He was in charge of a large section of the Democratic organisation. I had a letter of introduction to him from New York, and when I had presented it he was more genial than ever, introduced me all round his main office and detailed various people to give me any assistance I might require.

Eventually I found myself in the company of Mr. Wilson, who presented me with a card which indicated that he was an important official on the Legislative Council of Cook County, Illinois. He was a short, slow-moving man, very friendly and anxious to be helpful;

but his helpfulness was periodically disturbed by memories of his first visit to London a few years previously. It seemed that he "had it in for" the London taxi-drivers. He told me he had stayed at the Savoy, and one evening, desirous of dining with three friends at Simpson's, he entered a taxi-cab in Savoy courtyard with his friends, saying to the driver:

"Say, we want to sample some real home-fed British beef. Drive to Simpson's."

Whereupon the taxicab turned round and stopped; and when Mr. Wilson put his head out of the window and told the driver to get on with it, the driver said: "You *said* Simpson's guv'nor; 'ere you are, then."

Mr. Wilson could not forget that incident; it impressed him more than anything else in London except the Zoo; and the Zoo impressed him only because it was so much inferior to the Zoo that Chicago was going to have in a few years time.

Mr. Wilson was a friendly man, though I could not help feeling that he would be dangerous as an enemy. He was disconcertingly observant and shrewd; he seemed to be able to observe things that were happening behind him. On one occasion he was talking

to me with his back to a door twenty feet away, when a man suddenly and silently appeared in the doorway.

"Come right in Ed." Mr. Wilson said without turning his head—and there were no mirrors in the room. Then still without turning his head he dictated the following letter to a typist:

Dear—— Ed.—— has done good work for us. Please give him a job. Yours——"

He addressed the letter to a certain City official.

"That's politics in Chicago" he said to me with a grin "we've got about 7,000 jobs, big and little, to give away this election."

A few minutes later he gave me another glimpse of the political battle as fought in Chicago. We were discussing the relative differences between British and American political campaigns and he asked me if in England we introduced much "rough stuff" into the "game." I replied that our campaigns were comparatively quiet and harmless.

"Over here," he said, "we don't know from one day to another whether we're gonna sleep in a bed or a coffin."

I intimated, out of politeness, that in England we discounted a good many of the stories

we heard about the wild ways of Chicago, attributing them to journalistic exaggeration.

" Is that so ? " he answered, amusedly ; and turning to four clerks who were sitting around the office, he said :

" Say, boys, here's a feller from England who don't believe we take parlatics suriously. Show'm, will yuh ? "

Whereupon the four men simultaneously produced automatic pistols from their persons and levelled them at me.

" D'you believe it now ? " queried Mr. Wilson with another sly grin. I did believe it.

I describe these incidents to show the sort of atmosphere in which I was investigating political methods for Lloyd George and the Liberal Party. It was a fantastic atmosphere of terrorism, graft, bribery and corruption ; and its terrorism, graft, bribery and corruption were open and unashamed. To Chicagoan politicians it is incredible that politics should be conducted without these aids ; they frankly disbelieved me when I told them that certain things were not practised in England ; they laughed and told me I was merely trying to whitewash British politicians and boost them as being more " swell " than American politicians. Not wishing to create bad feeling, I gave up the attempt

to convince them that we did not conduct our election with guns and bribes in our pockets.

As a political study Chicago was fascinating from every point of view. Its blatant viciousness, its hardness and brutality, its tampering with and terrorising of electors and with the election registers—in one case at the previous election a register was removed during the night and faked in favour of a candidate—its wholesale corruption reached limits that to me were fantastic. We delved fairly deeply into the political methods of the city. We had the *entre* to every branch of headquarters, including that of an outside organisation, the Farm Information Bureau, which was covering the campaign for the farmers of the West. We wandered at night among the outlying committee rooms and district headquarters. And yet, when we eliminated the corrupt practices, there was little of value that we had not learned in New York. The parties in Chicago had the same extraordinarily efficient organisation, though here the Democratic Party was perhaps the better developed, as the Republican Party was the better developed in Washington.

The fundamental differences between British

and American methods, which I have already indicated, now definitely formed the basis of the report I was later to write. Our business now was to build up the detail that proved the effectiveness of these basic conceptions. This was not difficult. All our further observations from this point were added proof of that effectiveness. Belcher was by this time enormously impressed by the organisation of the parties, their financial arrangements, and more than all else by their insistence on the need for local organisation—a force that was seriously lacking in the Liberal Party. The American parties contend that no amount of headquarters organisation can compensate for lack of organisation in the constituencies; without a thorough, efficient driving force in small towns and villages, the efforts of headquarters are largely wasted, and the money spent might as well be thrown into Lake Michigan. In the Liberal Party the tendency was to neglect the constituencies; little or no difference was made in the assistance offered to weak constituencies as compared with strong constituencies. In America the organisers concentrated all their efforts on constituencies where victories might be won, and made only a pretence at concentrating on hopeless areas.

We piled up detail and proof as we progressed. We got at the heart of the farm organisations as we went further North and West. An afternoon at Milwaukee with Senator La Folette the Younger, that curious young leader of the Progressive wing of Republicanism, was interesting, but not informative. He happened to walk into an office where Sylvester and I were interviewing one of the campaign organisers, and before I knew who he was I was struck by the force of this young politician's face. He was dark-skinned, dark-haired, with rather full lips and curious protruding eyes, inscrutable, watchful, brooding. When he was amused he had a merry laugh; but when he was serious he looked a man to be reckoned with, a dangerous man to cross. He sat on a corner of a table, smoking cigarettes and talking with a slow deliberateness about the campaign and the Republican chances, but he could throw no further light on "method." I began to realise that we three foreign observers had reached a stage when we knew as much about the details of party organisation and propaganda as many of the politicians for whom that organisation and propaganda had been developed.

From Milwaukee we passed on to Madison

—the most delightful city I have seen in the United States. It lies on the edge of Lake Michigan, a miniature city of avenues, perfect streets, and wooden houses, wherein stands the State Agricultural University. We were entertained delightfully by the President, who deputed a friend to take us by car out into the farming districts to investigate the conditions and ascertain from the farmers themselves exactly how they were influenced by the various forms of propaganda and the various policies.

It was in Madison that we encountered opposition for the first and last time during our tour. We had gained access to the Democratic headquarters, and one of the chief organisers was giving us certain information when he was suddenly called out of the room by a confrere. He returned thirty seconds later—an oyster. His manner had completely changed; in place of his former friendliness now was a sullen suspiciousness. To our questions about certain phases of the campaign he returned monosyllabic replies; and after an uncomfortable two minutes we departed. As they evidently thought we were spying for the Opposition, we decided to defer the visit to Republican headquarters which we had

planned. Perhaps it was as well we did so, for we observed later that we were being followed by a young man who had been at work in the Democratic offices.

Des Moines, Iowa, was our next stop after Madison; then Omaha and the great farming area. Here we had a glimpse of the unhappy plight of many of the smaller farmers. Out in the hills of Nebraska we saw despondent, weary men struggling without hope to make a living out of their land. I believe that farming conditions in America are even worse than in Britain; certainly I have never seen at home so many despondent, broken-spirited farmers as I saw in the Middle West, men whose livelihood was being destroyed by industrialism and the imposition of tariffs on the products of industry. Few of them had any faith in the plans and promises of the two political parties for the relief of their distress; they seemed to have lost faith in everybody and everything.

In Omaha we had our only really unpleasant experience in America. We arrived late at night, and drove to an hotel which had been recommended from Chicago. The ground floor was a vast bare hall, in which a few rough-looking men of the stockbreeder type were

lounging. We were received upstairs by a little lean, dirty man in shirt and trousers, who reeled as he walked and smelt vilely of wood-alcohol. As soon as a light was switched on in the dirty bedrooms, innumerable cock-roaches fled into crevices and dark corners; and on the wall beside my bed I found ominous little red splotches, the blood of bugs that had been crushed and gone on their last long journey. Several of the orphaned progeny of the insects that had provided these decorations attacked me savagely during the night, which I spent in fitful sleep. I gained little consolation from Sylvester's reflection that we were suffering martyrdom for a great cause.

In the morning we discovered that the hotel did not provide food; not even a cup of tea could we get. So we went out into the cold morning and found a real hotel, with fat, smiling negro servitors and a pleasant odour of coffee and rolls and waffles and omelettes; and even though I was scratching myself surreptitiously under the table, I began to feel that the night's martyrdom had perhaps been worth while.

We had not long to endure the ugly town fo Omaha; we soon passed on to Kansas City,

which is even uglier, but more interesting because of the immense stockyards into which are received every year millions of cattle from the Western ranches. We made a tour of inspection of these stockyards in the company of a cowboy who was, I should imagine, the tallest and thinnest in the whole of America. We traversed miles of great wooden corridors built one above the other, wherein thousands of cattle were passing and repassing—to the trains, to the weighing machines, and to the tinned meat factories that reared their chimneys a mile or so away. Politically we found Kansas City useless, for we were beginning to exhaust the ideas that the American political system offered.

I did, however, spend an amazing afternoon and evening with a lady who possessed more energy than I ever imagined could be contained in a single human being. She was a phenomenon. She was a tremendously active worker in the Republican cause; and when she discovered that I was a "political student" from London, and a journalist in addition, she set herself to tell and show me all she knew.

She did not stop talking for four hours; indeed, during that time she spoke almost in

one continuous unbroken sentence. She began with engaging frankness to explain herself, thus:

"Y'know, I'm jest wrapped up in parlatics, simply wrapped up, well I must do *some*thin,' I must be active I caan't jest sit around twiddlin' muh thumbs, I have to be up and doing, I've lived a pure life and brought up five children and I'm a grandmother and I caan't have any more children so I jest got to do somethin' so here I am fightin' for Mr. Hoover, so you're English, o'course, I consider myself almost English, too, because my husband's people came over here from England, so he reckons he's three parts English and I reckon I am, a wife takes her husband's nationality, don't she, now you jest *got* to come along and see our woman's club—"

She procured a car. She flashed me all over Kansas City, out of the City, into the women's club, through it, round the gardens, home, round the committee rooms, introduced me to so many people so rapidly in an hour that if I had not escaped I should have known everybody in Kansas before nightfall. Her vitality was devastating, her tongue the secret of perpetual motion, her inquisitiveness inexhaustible, her unpopularity universal. When

finally I escaped she had absorbed all my own energy and left me as limp and useless as a dead flower!

To distract my mind and recover my strength I went that night to a theatre in the city, and was regaled with one of the most indecent revues, with the filthiest jokes and the nakedest and lewdest chorus and dancers, that I have seen outside Buenos Ayres. A can-can, in which a young woman quivered her almost naked posterior amid the enthusiastic applause of the young men and women of Kansas City, was an amazing exhibition for a city of the Middle West, rife with Fundamentalism and Nonconformity. Yet, lewd though the show was, it proved a welcome relief after my afternoon with the energetic lady who had turned to politics as an alternative to child-bearing.

One small idea I found in Kansas City. It was a competition in which prizes were offered by the Republican party for the best poster designs and slogans on Republicanism and Mr. Hoover. It created a great deal of interest and enthusiasm among local electors, and was said to have won many votes. This was one of the minor suggestions afterwards adopted by the Liberal Party in Britain, a number of

whose election posters were prize-winning designs in a national competition launched a few months before the May polling. Kansas City can therefore claim that it provided a British political party with a popular and useful suggestion.

From Kansas City we travelled direct to Richmond, Virginia. But Richmond produced little of value to us, although we had some interesting encounters. We heard a good deal about Lady Astor, who had recently been visiting her sister there. Richmond is rather proud of Lady Astor, since she has achieved the distinction of becoming the only American-born member of the British House of Commons ; and in the eyes of one rather stern old Virginian whom we met at a club, her achievement even palliated certain hoydenish activities in which he remembered her to have been engaged during her girlhood in Richmond !

Down through Virginia and North Carolina the trees were flaming torches of red and gold and brown, and the earth was red and gold, and the fields were mottled with the white puffs of the growing cotton, and negroes and negresses were working lazily in the lingering warmth of dying summer. It was an exquisite period ; one wanted to cast politics aside and

enjoy the languor of these southern days for a while before travelling back to the bleakness of the north. But we had little time for dalliance ; committee rooms, newspaper offices and interviews claimed us from morning till late at night. In Raleigh, North Carolina, I spent an interesting but, from my point of view, uninformative afternoon with Ex-Secretary Daniels in the office of the local newspaper which he has edited since his retirement from political life. It was uninformative for the reason I have already indicated—that the big men in politics know least about the details of organisation. Ex-Secretary Daniels sat back in his editorial chair, studying me with his quiet, watchful eyes while he talked, and looking, with his round, reddish face, more like a combination of farmer and preacher than of politician and newspaper-owner. I had never met him before, and he seemed to me a grave, earnest-minded little man, very well-informed, but a little disillusioned by public life. He talked well, he told me many of the intimate affairs of the Parties, but I could never approach closely to him ; there was about him a reserve that strongly contrasted with the open-hearted friendliness that I encountered everywhere else in Virginia and Carolina.

Our tour was virtually at an end now. All that remained was to return to New York to write the report, and catch a boat back to England. We spent almost a week on this work. I sat in my room on the twenty-second floor of the Hotel Commodore and wrote from nine in the morning to seven at night. Altogether the report extended to about 25,000 words. It was typed, revised, re-typed. The revised edition was typed mainly by Sylvester, for certain little differences between the typists had led to a rather unpleasant scene that ended in the suspension of the more competent of the two girls. Behold, then, A. J. Sylvester, chief private secretary to Lloyd George, sitting in his shirt sleeves twenty-two stories above Lexington Avenue, typewriting at incredible speed in order to have the report ready to carry aboard the Homeric at the end of the week.

The night before we sailed I spent in the Bowery with one of the Democratic organisers; and it was here that I encountered a phase of American commercial life which so greatly interested me that I feel compelled to describe it, even though it is not strictly relevant to this story. My Democratic friend, whom I had joined in a committee room inspection, asked

me if I would care to see a few of America's mushroom millionaires. He explained that a mushroom millionaire was a man who had, through one of those extraordinary strokes of luck so common in U.S. commercial life, risen suddenly from poverty to wealth in a day, only to be plucked and sent back again to poverty. He led me through a labyrinth of narrow streets into a district where every doorway and every shop window discreetly tendered an incomprehensible message in Chinese, and where soft-footed sons of the Orient passed swiftly to and fro in pursuit of their prosperous and secretive business. Here he took me to a dingy building which in a more prosperous past had been a Chinese theatre. He knocked on the door and we were admitted into the auditorium of the theatre. It was a fantastic place: dim-let, dingy, stinking with the odour of many dirty bodies. On the grimy walls writhed fantastic, red-painted Chinese dragons. At the far end of the hall was a stage, now covered by a curtain so dusty as to suggest that it had not been raised for years. In the space between the entrance and the stage were rows of benches, and along these benches lay perhaps a hundred sleeping men, some in rags, some developing rags, some as yet only

in the "seedy" stage. Several of them had slipped half off their benches, and were trailing on the floor, snoring heavily. In the silence their united breathing sounded like a continuous heavy sigh.

We picked our way down the aisle, avoiding an enormous negro who snored on the floor. My friend peered into the faces of these sleeping human wrecks and pointed to a flabby little man, whose grey, unshaven face was set in lines of utter weariness.

"That fellow," he said, "made a million and a half dollars in the Florida land boom. He was a decent sort of clerk before that. . . . This poor guy found oil in the West, speculated made a couple of million, speculated—and here he is. And here—" pointing to a big, paunchy man of perhaps fifty who lay against the wall—"he was a good film comic just after the war; made a pile—here he is. Lots of 'em drift here."

And so on. He pointed out a dozen men who in a few years had with equal facility made fortunes and lost them. These mushroom millionaires are one of the most pathetic elements of American civilisation. We in England who earn money more slowly and painfully are perhaps disposed to envy those fortunates who

in some sudden surge of speculation or regional development net for themselves fabulous wealth and world-wide notoriety.

We do not visualise the descent, nor realise that at least twenty per cent of American mushroom millionaires disappear within three years of their first scintillating entry into that magic world of finance. There are no statistics to show the number of starving ex-millionaires in the United States, but social workers who are in charge of the Chinese theatre and other charity doss-houses will tell you that the number runs into thousands.

Why is it, one may ask, that men who are clever enough to make riches at a stroke cannot keep their money, or retrieve themselves after their original gains have been lost in speculation? The answer is that their fortunes were made by chance and not by innate skill. One stroke of luck, one glimmering of insight, gave them an opportunity which they were quick enough to grasp; but their lack of the fundamental genius for finance soon lost them the fruits of their opportunity. Sudden wealth dazzled, gave an inflated sense of power, and concealed from them their own weaknesses. Strong with their illusions of power, they plunged, and sank. Sudden wealth can be attained by luck,

but it cannot be retained without skill. And as I speculated on this phenomenon of American life, I wondered which were the better—to have moved from Peckham to Park Lane for a month, and then on to Bermondsey; or never to have left Peckham? I leave it to you to decide.

SEVENTH CHAPTER

RECEPTION OF THE REPORT: FEAR, JEALOUSY, AND SELF-ASSURANCE: LLOYD GEORGE CALLS A CONFERENCE: SEARCH FOR A SUPERMAN: SIR H. SAMUEL'S IRONY: FIASCO OF A POSTER CAMPAIGN: BALDWIN'S FACE IRRITATES LLOYD GEORGE.

THE arrival of the American report in England stirred a great deal of curiosity and caused much speculation among members of the Liberal Party. Ninety eight per cent of them were prepared to condemn it, unread, as useless. In many quarters its arrival was heralded by a burst of derision. None of these people knew what it contained, yet nearly all were convinced that it could contain nothing of the slightest value to British political method, so self-satisfied were they that the methods of the past were the best of all possible methods.

Some were actuated by fear, some by senile self-assurance, some by jealousy. The fearful ones were those who had something to lose by a change of method ; the self-assured were those who could not conceive the possibility of any improvement in the system they themselves had accepted for so long ; the jealous were those who believed they should have been selected for the task of investigation—with the possibility of the usual recognition in some future honours list if the report assisted the Party back to power. There were a few of the more intelligent men who believed that some good might come of it ; among them were Sir William Edge, shrewd business man as well as politician. Sir William Sutherland, another business man, who afterwards expressed the opinion that the report was one of the finest things of its kind he had ever read, and Dr. Macnamara, who was lukewarm at first but enthusiastic afterwards. Sir Herbert Samuel was non-committal.

Observe that those who approved were all practical men, not essentially politicians. The life-long politicians, the policy experts, the men who could tell you word for word what Gladstone said in 1886, they were immoveably opposed.

Now while this manifestation rather depressed the three of us, in that it presaged a hard struggle to carry any new ideas into practice, it at the same time pleased us by confirming our opinion—emphasised so strongly in the report—that professional politicians were too bigoted and unreceptive to have charge of a campaign in the changed conditions of post-war politics. These opponents were not all-powerful; the sole arbiter was Lloyd George himself; yet the continual opposition of smaller men throughout the party was likely to prove a hindrance to any change that Lloyd George might authorise.

Lloyd George received the report on the Sunday morning, after we had arrived back in London on Saturday evening. The party broke up at Waterloo, each to our respective homes; and the next morning Sylvester motored to Churt, where Lloyd George was awaiting the report. He received it with interest, and settled down to study it during the afternoon. On the Monday morning I received a message at Old Queen Street to the effect that he was extremely interested, and intended to call a conference to discuss the report.

Some days later a preliminary private conference took place in his oak-panelled room on the

sixth floor. In addition to our three selves, the only others present were Lloyd George and Gwilym Lloyd George, the lively but otherwise un-Lloyd-George-like son of his father.

Lloyd George was in one of his best moods, affable, cheery, ready for a joke. He began by giving expression to a few humorous comments about America generally; and then, sitting down in one of his deep-leather armchairs, he asked us to make ourselves comfortable for a talk.

When Lloyd George sits down, he practically goes to bed: more than any man I know, he has the art of complete repose. He loses himself in his armchair. He sinks and sinks to a horizontal position until one is aware of nothing but a large pink face and a white shaggy head rising above the rolling arms of the voluminous chair. His body is so utterly at rest, so abandoned in ease, that it becomes nebulous, and you cease to be aware of it. The whole of his energy seems to be concentrated in his head. And all the while the head is alive, and the small eyes—small because they are set in such a large face—study your countenance, unobtrusively read your thoughts, flicker slowly on to the next face, back, on,

round; always unobtrusively, slowly, but so utterly sure.

His first remark was characteristic of him.

"What do the Americans think of our chances?"

I told him that many Americans believed that we were likely to be the second strongest party in the State. He was pleased with that, for he likes to have his own hopes confirmed. The best way to convince Lloyd George that you are entirely lacking in sound judgment is to refrain from confirming his opinion. Place-seekers and ambitious small men in the Party always pandered to this weakness in him; they would give him glowing pictures of their hopefulness, tell him tales of the extraordinary enthusiasm of the electors, in order to please. In this instance I spoke what I had found to be the truth; though being neither a place-hunter nor politically ambitious, I felt a reluctance to follow the usual path of the political sycophant. I gave him the reasons why America believed in the approaching success of the Party.

"Now, tell me in what way do American campaign methods differ fundamentally from our methods?" he asked, "what do they do that we omit to do? What is the outstand-

ing thought in your mind after all you've seen ? "

" The outstanding thought," I said, " is that their organisation makes ours look amateurish ; that they have shed old methods for new ones ; that they aren't hampered by unintelligent committees of people obsessed by the past and out-of-touch with the present."

He smiled a slow, quiet smile at this tilt, for since he is essentially an autocrat he has not a profound belief in committees.

" That's very sweeping," he said. " Of course, one must have committees in political parties, even if they aren't much use. What is their alternative ? "

" An autocrat," I replied, " a man who can take all the reins and come to quick decisions, preferably a practical man who yet understands party politics, and who can ignore political meddlers and appoint practical men to get his work done."

" Yes—s—s," he said, slowly and musingly, sinking a little further into the chair. " Yes. . . . like Geddes. . . . But where do you suggest we find such a man ? "

I said I couldn't suggest one.

" They're hard to find," he went on. " They're dangerous unless they are politically

sagacious. They step on everybody's corns—and there are so many corns in a Party! But there's a good deal in the theory, I think. How does it work in America?"

Now he had read the answers to all these questions in the report, which expounded at considerable length both the fundamental principles of American methods and the details of their working; yet he wanted to hear more. It proved to me his genuine interest in what we had given him. Therefore I went over the ground again, and when I had finished he said:

"We must certainly discuss it again. I think we do need tightening up. We must have a conference—with Samuel, Macnamara, and a few others—and see what can be done. In the meantime, you three should make your recommendations on the report and suggest the changes we ought to have in our own organisation."

Then his mind passed completely off the report, and he talked of other things until we left him, sunk once again into the depths of the leather armchair, all pink-and-white head and a pair of feet, no body.

The next day we took counsel in Sylvester's room and prepared the main recommendations

for the next conference. I do not propose here to give these in detail since many of them are too technical for general reading. I propose to give the bare outline of the main suggestions. They are :

(1) The appointment of a forceful chief organiser, to have complete control. This was specially necessary, since most of the party leaders and organisers were candidates, and would be absent during the election, leaving the organisation almost bereft of departmental chiefs.

(2) The offer of financial aid out of the Fund to certain constituencies, this money to be used by them under headquarters supervision. There were many constituencies that could have done well if their local organisations had not been too poor to fight effectively.

(3) The ruthless abolition of seventy per cent. of the existing literature, which was useless (Belcher told Lloyd George that most of it was useful only for wrapping up fish and-chips on Saturday nights) and the substitution of live, simple, human pamphlets and booklets, well illustrated ; the exploitations of the personality of

Party leaders and candidates—particularly the younger and better looking ones—in Party literature, for the benefit of the new women voters; (we were then trying to feed girls of 21 on safeguarding and kindred subjects in which they took not the slightest interest); the greater use of pictorial and cartoon literature for those who could not otherwise be induced to read a political pamphlet; the introduction of pamphlets written by well-known authors with large followings (Arnold Bennett, Edgar Wallace, Margaret Kennedy, Sir Oliver Lodge, were mentioned), whose names would attract attention where the names of politicians would fail to interest; the appointment of a professional layout man to present the literature attractively.

(4) An effort should be made to induce the Government to permit broadcasting by political parties. (Personalities such as Lloyd George would have great power to sway listeners by wireless).

(5) Leading articles, stereo and block services for provincial weeklies and bi-weeklies.

(6) The organised use of the film and the movietone as propaganda.

(7) The free distribution of gramophone records carrying entertainment, with a little political propaganda interspersed.
(8) Enlargement of the specialised departments at headquarters, with the introduction of certain experts.

There were also a number of recommendations on the subject of constituency and general organisation, too technical to be repeated here.

There was a good deal of curiosity and nervousness in various departments at headquarters as to what we proposed to recommend, and what effect it would have upon them. I was approached in a casual, chatty way by several men who obviously wanted to know whether their particular departments came in for any criticism; but I kept my own counsel and did not enlighten them. Even an invitation to lunch by one who had previously never displayed any pleasure in my company did not draw me!

Lloyd George arranged for the conference to take place in his room at the House of Commons. I walked across with Dr. Macnamara and found Sir Herbert Samuel, Colonel Tweed, Dr. Hunter, Oldman, and Sylvester already there. Belcher came in a

few minutes later ; then Miss Harvey, Secretary of the Women's National Liberal Federation.

We sat round a table in the inner sanctum —a room of wonderful dignity, Gothic stonework, panelling, and leaded windows. Lloyd George sat back in his chair and idly drew lines with a pencil on a piece of paper as he talked. Dr. Macnamara sprawled in an armchair. Dr. Hunter sat also in an armchair, looking, I thought, rather nervous and uncomfortable (since he was Director of the Campaign Department this was only natural). Sir Herbert Samuel sat up in his chair, very correct, very watchful and inscrutable, as always. Colonel Tweed leaned on the table, with copies of the recommendations before him.

After a few preliminaries Lloyd George asked me to outline the principal recommendations. I did so, though it was quite unnecessary, and I was beginning to grow tired of repeating them, particularly as everybody had perused a typewritten copy of them. In the middle of it, Lloyd George, apparently also growing tired of hearing them again, said suddenly :

" I think there's a good deal in this superman suggestion."

Nobody agreed. There was a brief silence. I could see that his mind was set on this idea

of providing some driving force in the organisation; but it was apparent that everybody else considered the step unnecessary, perhaps a little fantastic.

"We have to consider," Lloyd George continued, "that nearly everybody will be absent during the last weeks. You, Samuel, will be campaigning, I shall be in Wales, Hunter, Macnamara, and others will be in their constituencies. We need somebody to take control, hold things together, push matters on. And it will have to be somebody who can organise and drive, and at the same time who knows how to steer through Party rocks."

"In that case, what we really require is some kind of an archangel," said the quiet, gentle-ironical voice of Sir Herbert Samuel. There was a general laugh, in which Lloyd George joined.

"Thank heaven, we can't find an archangel," he replied. And then his mind took one of those extraordinary jumps that in conversation occasionally reveal the rapidity of his association of ideas and the unexpectedness of their direction.

"Talking of archangels," he said, "has anybody read Aldous Huxley's 'Point Counter Point?'"

One or two of those present had read the book, and for the next few minutes the conversation flickered around this subject, and again returned to the problem of the superman.

Somebody facetiously suggested Gordon Selfridge, and surprisingly Lloyd George seemed to consider it seriously for a moment, finally deciding that Selfridge was not the man, that while he could provide the drive he might fail in political tact, and that in any case he probably would not entertain the idea. A number of other men were suggested and rejected, until finally it was decided to approach Seebohm Rowntree, who was a Liberal, knew the Party-rocks, was friendly to Lloyd George, and had taken an important part in the Liberal Industrial Inquiry some time before. He was also largely responsible, later, for the Unemployment Scheme.

He did not accept the post of superman, however, and the plan of appointing an especial organisation chief eventually came to nought.

In this manner the conference progressed, desultorily, ineffectively, casual as a tea-party. A few decisions were taken ; that the literature should be reformed and rejuvenated ; that more technical, non-political men should be engaged ; that films might be utilised with greater effect ;

that I should have a larger staff; that Sir Herbert should make renewed efforts to secure broadcasting facilities, since Lloyd George was particularly interested in this method of campaigning.

At this point an interesting and original suggestion, emanating from L. J. Humphrey, the propaganda chief, was made to Lloyd George, and its reception caused some amusement. Humphrey had considered the possibility, and proved the feasibility, of broadcasting from the Continent. Inquiries in France had shown that arrangements could have been made for the Liberal leaders to speak on the air to the British electorate several times a week. This was a delightful idea. We visualised the chagrin of the Opposition, the defeat of the B.B.C. and the Government, who had at that time declined all facilities in England, with the exception of the usual one-broadcast-per-party shortly before the election. Sir Herbert Samuel, however, visualised something else. He saw himself crossing the Channel in foul weather, being violently ill, and becoming the butt of cartoonists and humorists. And he intimated his strong disinclination to take part in this overseas broadcast. Eventually the idea was discarded. I was sorry, for it would

have made a spectacular little victory, well worth an hour's sea-sickness.

It seemed fairly obvious to the three of us, when the meeting had broken up, that little would be done in the way of reform. A few minor defects would be remedied; but they would be no more than half-hearted remedies. The only genuine interest and enthusiasm had been shown by Lloyd George; it was clear that the others were not anxious for any drastic changes to be made. The fact that Lloyd George was enthusiastic meant little or nothing; for his inability or disinclination to bother with the details of organisation made it easy for proposed reforms to be shelved, or at best to be carried out in such a desultory, half-hearted manner as to be ineffective.

Later events, however, facilitated a number of reforms, and as the General Election approached, Lloyd George did take a very active interest in certain details. As a result there was a general improvement in many directions; but most of the attempted reforms came so late that they had not sufficient time to produce any real effect.

As an example, I may quote the poster campaign. We had urged an extensive use of posters, other people had made similar recom-

mendations, the subject was discussed, shelved, discussed, toyed with, and nothing was done until a few weeks before the Election, when Tory posters began to appear everywhere—great pictorial and letterpress posters on every hoarding and on all the best "solus sites." It was the vastest poster campaign ever undertaken by a political party in this country.

Naturally it caused a fluttering in the Liberal dovecotes, and immediate decisions were made to compete. But it was too late. Poster sites cannot be obtained in a week, often not in a month—the best perhaps not in a year; the Conservative had secured the best, and had been assisted in this by a great business concern whose directors had placed at their disposal, all the finest sites usually occupied by the firm's advertisements.

Bitter complaints came from constituencies, where Liberal candidates protested against the lack of Liberal and the superabundance of Conservative posters. Irate candidates who had almost reached the limit in election expenses and could not afford expenditure on big posters in competition with the Opposition, wrote, called and rang up to express their indignation and to make extremely bitter comments on the misuse, or lack of use, of the Lloyd George

Fund! Election agents, frightened by the Conservative avalanche, came appealing pathetically for posters, and received with scepticism the answer that it was impossible to obtain sites.

Lloyd George himself arrived in London one morning from Churt, furiously angry, because at every corner and on many house-sides on the road all the way from Godalming a giant Baldwin looked at him with fatuous self-satisfaction and invited him to contemplate the virtue of putting "Safety first!"

"*No* Liberal posters," he said. "Scarcely one Liberal poster. What are we getting for all this money we're spending?"

Useless to tell him that procrastination on the part of the leaders had prevented our obtaining sites. I raced off by car down the Guildford Road to investigate, and found that we were not out-numbered by more than three to one; but unfortunately all the Liberal posters had been placed in side-street positions where they could not easily be seen, whereas the Baldwin giant looked every motorist in the eye. I could well understand Lloyd George's anger at thus being eclipsed on his own road home, but I was powerless to change the situation. Shortly afterwards I learned from

a Conservative headquarters official that certain Conservatives with a sense of humour had made a special effort to plaster the road to Churt with Baldwin posters, with the object of disturbing the Liberal leaders' peace of mind! If it is any satisfaction to them now, they may care to know that they succeeded.

This kind of tumult, always the result of procrastination, was not uncommon, although the poster debacle was undoubtedly the greatest. And herein lay the whole virtue of superseding committees by one strong and forcible and experienced organiser, who would have foreseen and made provision. The poster campaign had been in the hands largely of politicians. Its comparative failure proved the ineffectiveness of political organisers in technical matters outside their own spheres; and it proved, too, the soundness of the American system.

I think Lloyd George fully realised this shortly before the election, for he suddenly invited J. C. Akerman, formerly advertisement manager of the "Times," and then a director of a big newspaper group, to run an advertising campaign. Akerman accepted. In a few days he had an enormous campaign planned and almost ready; in a few days more it was launched. It was extraordinarily well done,

and was admitted to have been the most successful and forcible propaganda of the election. Yet if it had been placed in the hands of politicians it would inevitably have been " muffed," because politicians are not advertising experts. Akerman was not a politician ; he knew little enough of policy ; but as an organiser he organised those who did know.

Here again, then, was a further confirmation of the soundness of the American idea. I believe that the Liberal Party in May, 1929, might have gone infinitely further than it did if during the preceding year it had been organised by a progressive, non-political " strong man."

EIGHTH CHAPTER

THE FIGHT AGAINST LETHARGY: ENTER THE STUNT-MERCHANT: LIVENING UP BY-ELECTIONS: CANINE CANVASSERS: THE OMELETTE ELECTION: THE HOME-IN-COMFORT LEAGUE.

POLITICIANS of long experience are accustomed nowadays to deplore the lack of public interest in the by-election. In that elysium of the pre-war past, these isolated political fights were the occasion for intense local excitement, acrimonious disputations, quarrels, mud-slinging, egg-throwing; they were in fact occasions for a kind of eruption that roused the whole of a district and provided a topic of conversation for weeks. In those days even small boys enjoyed a by-election, wore party colours, and fought among themselves, Tory versus Radical. I have happy memories of my own activities in this direction, and of the notoriety I won among other small boys by throwing a handful of mud at Horatio Bottomley's trousers and

running for dear life during a by-election a Aldershot.

But the day has gone when the stale egg and the brickbat were instruments of political persuasion. Political enthusiasm that in the past used to reach fever-heat, has degenerated now into a luke-warm thing, a restricted interest. In the midst of a by-election it is possible to find many local people who two days before a poll are supremely unaware of the existence of a political contest. If a live and vigorous interest is to be roused in a modern by-election, some very strong issue, preferably local, must be raised.

Especially was this lack of enthusiasm apparent during the two stagnant years that preceded the General Election of 1929. Candidates of all parties used to deplore the lack of public interest and wring their hands over the apathy of the electorate, complaining bitterly of ill-attended meetings and lack of public support ("Two weeks hard fighting, and not an eye reported blackened," as one agent, an old hand in political battles, said to me on the night before the Ilford poll in 1928, when Comyns Carr stood in the Liberal interests.) Partly this was due to the long regime of the Conservative party; but mainly it was a reflection

of the generation's lack of interest in politics. Whether this lack of interest is the result of popular education having destroyed the public's belief in politicians, or to the dispersion of interest through a larger and more unwieldy electorate, or merely to the general disillusionment of a people who since the War have ceased to believe in the Heaven-inspired merits of any particular party, I am not prepared to discuss; I draw attention to the fact that this lack of interest did exist, in order to explain the appearance at by-elections of that now ubiquitous individual, the Stunt Merchant, or more genteely, the Publicity Organiser.

During this period both the Conservative and Liberal Parties invariably sent to by-elections a publicity organiser in addition to the election agent. The agent's business is to run the election, prepare and display the posters, arrange for the distribution of literature, organise meetings; the function of the publicity expert is to stimulate public interest and cater for the popular press. At whatever cost, the publicity expert must attract attention to the candidate and his policy; and if the policy by itself fails to stimulate interest, then attention must be drawn to the candidate, his personality, his charm, the splendid things he

proposed to do for the constituency, and to the urgent necessity for this wonderful man to be returned to Parliament in the people's interest. When a vital political issue was lacking, by some means or other local interest had to be roused, and it did not greatly matter how this was achieved, so long as it reflected no discredit on the candidate nor held him up to ridicule. Hence by-elections often developed into a struggle between a pair of antagonistic "stunt-merchants," each striving to draw the limelight upon his own candidate; and the candidates became puppets whose activities, real or imaginary, were often the result of the manipulations and string-pullings of publicity experts whose whole attention was concentrated upon guiding them—and with them their policies—on to the public stage. Often it was necessary to utilise the imagination to its fullest extent so that a dull candidate, or a dull by-election, might receive its share of public attention. And as often it was necessary to concentrate upon the task of imposing on the candidate a personality which he did not possess. Sometimes, when all else failed, it would be necessary to create public sympathy for the man, so that women electors would receive an impression of him as a kind, thought-

ful, chivalrous fellow. At other times it might be good policy to induce him to take a profound interest in some local " evil " and find methods whereby that evil could be remedied if he were returned to the House of Commons. But often enough, when all else failed, the struggle degenerated into a mere clamour for attention.

One of the most extraordinary by-elections of this type was that at Hanley in April, 1928, which I attended in the capacity of publicity organiser for Lloyd George's headquarters. It was the custom for headquarters to send an organiser of this kind to every by-election, and the task usually fell to myself, or to Basil Murray, son of Professor Gilbert Murray, or Albert White, an old hand in politics. This Hanley election was particularly interesting because the Conservative interests were represented by a candidate who in private life was a theatrical manager and producer of touring plays—Alfred Denville. Like most theatrical managers, he was a lively, active fellow, full of a dare-devilish vitality, possessing a tremendous sense of humour, and utterly devoid of self-consciousness. Denville was staying at a Hanley hotel, which was also my own headquarters.

This Conservative candidate was surrounded

by a curious collection of helpers. It included a number of odd but entertaining theatrical types, who on a two-minute acquaintance and without any provocation addressed one as "chum," "old lad," and "cully." At nights the whole crowd of us used to sit in the lounge until one a.m. or later, and sing songs after the day's campaigning. Alfred Denville was certainly out to enjoy himself, even though he had not much chance of being elected.

The Liberal candidate was Walter Meakin, member of a local family with considerable interests in the pottery industry. He was a man of a different calibre: sensitive, gentle, unobtrusive, and tremendously earnest in his political ambitions. He too had little chance, for Labour was strong in this murky industrial area; but like Alfred Denville, he was determined to put up the best fight possible in the circumstances. There was little genuine political interest in the election. The absence of any strong political issue—apart from the inevitable one of Safeguarding, which was endemic in this industrial area—left the electorate cold in its attitude towards the fight; nobody except the Labour followers, who were so steadfastly Labour as to be invulnerable to any arguments which the other two candidates

could advance, displayed much enthusiasm. Hence it became imperative for me to create some enthusiasm ; or, failing enthusiasm, then a little interest in the Liberal candidate.

I began in a mild and trivial way by recruiting the help of the dogs of the town. There are a great many dogs in Hanley : few families in the Potteries are without their canine pets. I prepared a message from Walter Meakin, in which he warned the receiver against placing credence in the Tory candidate's promises, and asked for a vote for himself. Then I gathered a small band of willing helpers, and sent them forth into the streets to attach the message to the collar of every dog that came within their ken, so that every dog in Hanley would take back to its master a note from the Liberal candidate. In many of the byways of Hanley that day, enthusiastic male and female Liberals might have been seen furtively fumbling at the collars of wandering dogs. One of the fumblers was unfortunate enough to be bitten, though not severely, by an animal that objected to being utilised as a vehicle for the dissemination of political propaganda : doubtless it was a dog with Conservative tendencies ; but beyond this no damage was done. As I had anticipated, the newspapers next morning made

a brave display of this small piece of propaganda, which the sub-editors, unable to resist an opportunity for facile alliteration, called almost without exception :

CANINE CANVASSERS FOR

LIBERAL CANDIDATE.

Thus by the aid of Hanley's dogs did Walter Meakin enter Hanley's political arena. Hanley seemed to be intensely amused over the affair : Walter Meakin and his canine canvassers were the chief topic of conversation that day. Alfred Denville took it in good part, for when I saw him later in the hotel he said, with a twinkle :

" My boy, you put it across me yesterday, but I'll get even. I've sent for a thousand white mice, and I'm going to tie a message to their tails and let 'em lose on the town ! "

One of his theatrical helpers, a queer little man with a cauliflower ear and peering, screwed-up eyes, chimed in with : " That's right, chum. That'll get 'em. Alf's a rare 'un, Alf is."

Although he was not seriously perturbed, Denville's theatrical sense of publicity impelled him to compete. He realised that the affair

of the dogs had given us the laugh of him, and at the same time had created a friendly feeling for Walter Meakin by providing the town with a little harmless amusement. People usually like those who entertain them: a good joke inspires a fellow feeling. Hanley was now beginning to say that Walter Meakin was an enterprising fellow, "a decent chap." I knew I was on the right path as I listened that evening to the town talk in various saloons and hotel lounges whither I had gone to sound public feeling.

The Conservative counter-move came the next day, when an informant told me that Alfred Denville was planning to attract attention by descending a mine to "investigate conditions"—and incidentally to be photographed descending the shaft with a pick over his shoulder. This move was calculated to impress upon Hanley the fact that the Conservative candidate was essentially a practical man bent upon understanding and appreciating local conditions. Quite a legitimate political move, of course; but the Conservatives made one mistake. There was no mine in the constituency, so that it was not strictly necessary for a candidate to concern himself with the conditions of mines. I kept this

knowledge to myself until the Conservatives and their candidate had set off by car, followed by another car full of newspaper men and photographers, to a mine some distance outside the constituency.

They returned in the afternoon in great triumph. Some excellent photographs had been taken. The newspaper men went off to the post office to wire to their papers the sensational descriptive story of how the Conservative candidate had hewn coal in the depths of a mine. I then launched my small counter-stroke in the form of a faintly ironical statement to the effect that there were no mines in the constituency; concluding by asking why the Conservative candidate should have taken so much trouble to be spectacular in a cause that was really not his concern. Could it have been merely for the sake of creating an effect?

Hanley laughed again the next morning—a little louder; and its laugh was definitely against the Conservatives. Hanley felt that the Conservative had overstepped the bounds of reasonableness.

Meanwhile Walter Meakin and his wife, like the Labour candidate, were quietly going round the town in a door-to-door canvass. In the circumstances it was the wisest course: Hanley

was suspicious of the spectacular; it preferred a little humanity; the personal element was necessary. I meditated on the advisability of trying to stir a little feminine sympathy for the Liberal candidate by some simple action. The opportunity came that afternoon. I was accompanying the candidate and his wife on their door-to-door canvass when we encountered at one cottage an old woman and her son. The son had just returned, tired and begrimed, from his work at a pottery, and his mother was on the point of preparing his tea.

Now it happened that Mrs. Meakin was a charming Frenchwoman; and in the course of conversation the son mentioned his experiences in France during the War.

"Ay, and often does 'e talk aboot the cookin' 'e used to get over there," said the mother, with a smile. "But I can't give 'im a feed like the feeds 'e used to get in your country, ma'am."

Here was an opportunity. I suggested that the candidate's wife, since she was a Frenchwoman, should cook him a special French savory omelette as a treat. The mother was delighted with the suggestion, the son shyly pleased. There were no eggs in the house, but we bought some from a shop at the end of the dreary little street. The candidate's wife

thereupon went into the tiny kitchen and made a large and most delicious omelette, which mother and son insisted upon her sharing with them. The son enjoyed it enormously, and the old mother enjoyed the son's enjoyment.

This incident, trivial though it undoubtedly was, made a considerable impression on Hanley. It touched the heart of Hanley's mothers, the thought of this charming French lady going into the kitchen and "cooking French" for a tired pottery worker and his mother. The press took up the affair; one London newspaper wired to its local representative, instructing him to obtain a recipe for this political omelette, which recipe it duly published. A local hotel put the omelette on its menu. Women wrote to the candidate and his wife promising their support. There was a noticeable increase in the attendance at the candidate's indoor meetings: women wanted to see the candidate's wife, and brought their husbands with them. Conservative and Labour speakers in the streets of Hanley jeered at the omelette, trying to raise a laugh at the expense of the Liberal candidate; but desisted when they found that Hanley liked its political omelette and the simple, friendly action of the candidate's wife in making it.

People began to speak of the campaign as "the Omelette by-election." For two days the omelette practically dominated the political situation.

The next day one of the other candidates was photographed at a cottage door kissing the baby of a prospective voter—an ancient political trick in which Walter Meakin would not indulge. The day after that the Conservative candidate announced his intention of going down a sewer to inspect the conditions of work, actually did go down, and was photographed emerging from a street manhole. Hanley laughed derisively. The Liberal candidate, during his house-to-house visits, found a pottery worker, who was moving his home, in the act of loading furniture into a small van, and assisted him in the removal, thereby gaining further approbation and creating more sympathy among the voters of Hanley.

In this manner was the interest of the public roused in this and other by-elections: by trivial, spectacular, or friendly actions, all calculated to achieve a particular effect. These tricks may not have been of any political value, but at least they served the purpose of drawing attention to candidates and their policies at a period when the public was not in

the least disposed to interest itself in political matters.

Yet there was at this time one by-election during which "stunting" did in fact have a considerable effect on votes. It took place at Ilford. The Liberal candidate was Comyns Carr, K.C., and the Conservative, Sir George Hamilton. The Conservative was returned, but by a much narrower majority than on previous occasions: the Liberal increased his party's vote by several thousands. This increase was partly attributed to the personality of the candidate, and partly to the creation, for election purposes, of a mushroom organisation that touched the imagination of the public.

In this by-election there was no live political issue. Forty per cent of the people of Ilford were not even aware that a by-election campaign was in progress. Comyns Carr was working indefatigably, but with disheartening results. Ilford went its way, travelled up to the city in packed trains every morning and back at night, went to the pictures, and showed but the faintest interest in the political battle. The newspapers could find little to write about the campaign, and the canvassers reported a disconcerting lackadaisicalness among the people upon whom they called.

The only local " scandal " whose exploitation would be likely to touch the electors was that of the railways. Ilford, an over-crowded suburb, was disgracefully served. Its trains to and from the City were crammed with men, women and girls, fourteen and eighteen in compartments built to accommodate ten. These unfortunate people had even to travel to and from their work crowded into guards-vans among the crates of rabbits and boxes of fish which they would be eating for their next day's breakfast and dinner. The travelling conditions were truly appalling. Comyns Carr was urging from his platform the development of a new electrified line, but this failed to stir much enthusiasm. I realised that this railway scandal was the thing nearest the hearts of Ilford people if it could be brought home to them ; and I realised, too, that a new railway scheme projected from a political platform was a cold and remote affair, unlikely to stir the susceptibilities of this rather unimaginative suburb. If it were to produce any effect, the scheme would have to be humanised in some way.

I cast around for some idea ; and a phrase uttered by Comyns Carr in one of his speeches gave me a clue. He had said that the workers

of Ilford ought to be enabled to get home in some sort of comfort at nights. The phrase "home-in-comfort" attracted me. There was about it something so solidly suburban, so suggestive of moderately-cushioned ease, bowler hats, antimacassars and front parlours. I felt that it was a phrase which might appeal strongly to the people of Ilford if it could by any means be forced to their attention. And I conceived there and then the idea of forming, for the benefit of the harassed women and girl travellers of Ilford, the "Home in Comfort League," to be organised by the said women and girls in support of Comyns Carr, the Liberal candidate.

I approached an intelligent local woman who was a voluntary worker in the Party cause, and invited her to be president; a position she gladly accepted. I asked her to form a committee of six women, which feat she achieved within two hours. I arranged a meeting, and wrote for the president an inaugural speech, in which she called upon the women and girls of Ilford to fight for Comyns Carr, the Home-in-Comfort candidate.

"Are we," she declared, "to continue travelling to and from our work, day after day, week after week, year after year—tired to

death after the day's work—in these appalling conditions? Are we never to have anything better than this herding together like animals? Are we to go on paying taxes out of our hard-earned salaries for the privilege of sitting in cold, dirty guards-vans on boxes of fish and crates of dead rabbits—ruining our clothes, our tempers, our health?" . . .

The young women of Ilford flocked to hear this fiery champion of "home-in-comfort." She touched them deeply. Her cause immediately won their sympathy, because she grasped the simple humanities of the situation and revealed them in a simple, comprehensible manner. The "Home-in-Comfort League" jumped into prominence in twenty-four hours. Women and girls who had never before taken an interest in politics joined up by the hundred, and, because the subject was one which they understood so well, they became ardent and effective propagandists for Comyns Carr. The London press took a keen interest in the organisation; sent photographers to picturise the League at work, and special reporters to write of its daily activities. Enthusiasm grew stronger every day, and Ilford at last began to display a genuine interest in its by-election. Then Lloyd George decided to speak at Ilford

in support of the candidate. It was his habit not to appear personally at by-elections where the chances of a Liberal candidate were excessively bad, because, like other wise politicians, he did not care to be too intimately associated with a poor result; moreover, certain sections of the opposition press made a practice of attributing a Liberal failure to the Liberal leader's attendance. But the chances at Ilford were so improved that he decided to make a local appearance. The Home-in-Comfort League turned up in great force at this meeting, which was so great a success that Ramsay Macdonald held a meeting in the same hall a day or two later.

Of such stuff are the outer garments of politics made. There are times when the most intelligent of policies fail to attract public attention, yet will the simplest and often silliest and most trivial incidents stir the electors to enthusiasm. And during that period of political lethargy, enthusiasm was joyously welcomed. It was imperative that Liberalism should make some sort of a noise. Opponents everywhere were dinning into the public ear their parrot cries that "Liberalism was dead, there was no longer any interest in the Liberal party, the Liberal party was finished." We

had to counter this, and the only manner in which we could do so was to force the public to take some interest in Liberalism and its representatives. It was often a hard and disheartening struggle, but as often it was a joyous one ; and when our efforts were crowned with some small triumph, it was worth the struggle, however trivial may have been the method of achievement. That is my excuse for describing a few of these trivial methods in these pages.

NINTH CHAPTER

ELEVENTH HOUR HYSTERIA: THE TERROR OF THE TAPE: AN ALL-NIGHT SITTING: DISAPPOINTMENT: THE GIRL WHO WEPT: LLOYD GEORGE'S RETURN: FUTILITY.

THE emotions of one who in prison awaits the verdict of a Home Secretary upon a petition for reprieve cannot be far remote from the feelings of those who at the eleventh hour await at a political headquarters, on the night of the declaration of a polls, the decision of the public. The thirty-first of May, 1929, was at Liberal headquarters a day of feverish idleness. Every activity had come abruptly to an end, and the fine enthusiasms, the vigorous arguments, the schemings and plottings and absurdities that for months had so tenaciously maintained one's interest, had suddenly sunk into a well of apparent quiescence; as when the tumbling waters of a stream pour suddenly into a deep

pool whose seeming placidity is belied by an uneasy but scarcely perceptible swirl of the surface waters.

This appearance of calm is possessed by every individual at headquarters, but beneath it one may detect an uneasiness that masquerades under a bright, artificial cheerfulness. Actually nobody is genuinely cheerful; yet nobody is profoundly depressed. Rather is there a combination of uncertain emotions, each in a measure modifying the other. There exists a hope that the result will be better than one dared to expect, a fear that it will be infinitely worse than the least optimistic prophets had promised, and a certainty that it cannot conform to one's preconception of all that it ought to be.

Heads of departments sit about their rooms, trying futilely to interest themselves in matters that entirely fail to hold their attention; until finally they abandon the effort and wander into the rooms of other heads of departments, who gladly abandon their own attempts to simulate a comparative unconcern and give themselves up freely to speculation on possible results. Nor is this suppressed feverishness confined to those who hold the reins of power: the youngest typist may be observed to be in a

state of ill-concealed excitement, liable to laugh immoderately at the most attenuated jokes, and to indulge, with careless abandon and a sense of her own wickedness, in a glass of port at lunch-time. This feminine abandon at this period was, however, partly engendered by fear, since most of these young women realised that their positions at headquarters depended upon the result of the election. They were only too well aware that a poor result would inevitably be the prelude to a drastic reduction of staff, whereas a success would in all probabiilty make their employment secure at least until the next general election.

In this manner did the fateful day drag out its interminable length. There were few callers : everybody who had an interest in the political battle was too fully occupied to have any interest in headquarters. Lloyd George was at his Welsh home, awaiting the result of the election in his own constituency. Sir Herbert Samuel, Dr. Hunter, Dr. Macnamara and other headquarters candidates were also absent on similar missions.

Nothing now remained but to await the results, the first of which were expected at eleven o'clock that night. Everything had been prepared for their reception. The tape machine

whose task it would be to announce the fate of the Party had been overhauled, oiled, and well fed with paper, so that it should be prepared for its momentous all-night task. It stood in the corner of my room, a sinister piece of mechanism, strangely silent. Normally this machine—a special one devoted almost entirely to news of political import—displayed at all times considerable, if intermittent, activity; but on this day it was so quiescent as to be positively disturbing to the nerves. I was obsessed by an impression that it was a kind of inhuman robot, a thing of intelligence but devoid of feeling, awaiting the word of command of its equally intelligent and inhuman master on the other side of London, which would galvanise it into clattering life and cause it coldly, metallically and with agonising slowness to spell out the fate of the Liberal Party.

Over others than myself, too, this robot seemed to exercise the same peculiar fascination: typists and secretaries in particular would constantly enter the room, make some irrelevant remark, and wander across to inspect the silent machine of fate, albeit they were well aware that it could give them no information of value until late that night. To many of them it had become a kind of prescient and quite

terrifying fortune-telling monster which during the next twenty-four hours would forecast for them their futures.

Since everybody who remained at headquarters was eager to spend part of the night in the building, for the purpose of learning the trend of the election by studying the early results, arrangements were made for a late sitting, and a large supply of sandwiches and coffee was ordered for ten-thirty p.m.

When I returned to my office at 10.45 my ears were assailed by a clamour of voices, in which the feminine was predominant. I found some thirty people gathered in the outer room, consuming the sandwiches and coffee with nonchalant speed, and talking in voices so high-pitched with excitement as to suggest hysteria. The feverishness of the day had attained its greatest height. Everybody was so brightly, so inordinately cheerful that the underlying tension was at once apparent. A number of staff workers had brought with them their friends and relations, husbands and wives, who, not having undergone the strain of the day, were scarcely at all infected by the general feverishness, and in consequence gave an impression of being unnaturally aloof and self-possessed amid the excitement and artificial

vivacity of their friends. Amid this babble and clatter, on a table at one side of the room, stood a large loud-speaker wireless which had been installed in anticipation of the tape-machine developing a mechanical aberration, as tape-machines have a habit of doing at critical moments.

A few minutes later Colonel Tweed came in, unperturbable as always, and clearly prepared for the worst: in his estimate of the party's chances he had never been an optimist. McGegan, chief of the financial department — who was reputed to keep the Lloyd George Fund in his pocket—after giving several derisive sniffs, according to his habit, broke into a series of pleasant Scottish witticisms which enabled those who were unduly over-wrought to give vent to their suppressed feelings in outbursts of unrestrained laughter.

It was during one of McGegan's jokes that the tape machine broke out suddenly into a whirring activity; and a second later the voice of the wireless announcer super-imposed itself with grating masculinity upon the clamour of hysterical laughter. Like a stone sinking beneath the surface of water the voices died away, while the first result was announced by both tape-machine and human voice, the two

coinciding so perfectly as to constitute what is known in sporting language as a "dead heat." The termination of this first announcement —a Labour gain—was heralded by a clamour of voices even more excitable than before, since the tension was now broken and the pent feelings of thirty men, women and girls were at last released by this unleashing of the future.

Hereafter results came through in rapid succession: Labour gains, Conservative gains, Labour holds fast, Conservative, no change; a balancing of Labour and Conservative; Labour advancing, Conservative gaining ground; three or four consecutive Labour gains. And all this while, never a gain for the Liberals. I watched the assembled faces as they hung over the tape-machine or circled the wireless instrument, and saw the brightness of fever fading from them, giving place in some to an expression of numbed incredulity, in others to a kind of shocked modesty, as in the faces of genteel people whose inmost feelings have been outraged. One young woman, overwrought by this day and night of tension, and now finding the reaction too great for her, burst into tears. Voices that previously had been shrill with a mingling of anticipation and anxiety, now were subdued, like the voices of relatives out-

side a sick-room. The face of McGegan, normally as self-possessed and reserved as a Scottish face is capable of being, grew positively mask-like, so that no observer should receive an impression of anything he might be feeling. Colonel Tweed was, as always, Colonel Tweed.

As the night progressed, and the results continued to arrive in the same ratio, showing no glimmer of hope for the Liberal Party, there was another reaction of feeling. The gathering began again to develop a vociferous but artificial cheerfulness, after the manner of those who, having been involved in some disaster, begin to recover their spirits when they know that the worst has happened and that in comparison there can be nothing very drastic to come. One of the young women, preparing to go home—it was then about two a.m.—voiced the thought that must have been in the minds of the majority of her fellows by saying, jocularly and with a swagger of bravado, that she was going out " to look for a new job." It was not until about four a.m. that the offices were emptied and headquarters closed down, and the last worker went away to sleep off his or her disappointment. At that time something less than twenty seats had gone to the Liberals out of

more than two hundred ; and it was clear that the victory was going to Labour. Even the much-coveted balance of power—the most that the Liberals had hoped for—at that stage seemed unachievable.

The full force of the Party's disappointment was not apparent until the next morning. Headquarters was enveloped in a profound gloom, and all those who for so many months had worked so enthusiastically and unstintingly were burdened by a weight of depression that could not now be cast off by any exaggerated effort of cheerfulness. Indeed, nobody made such an effort.

There was still no word from the Party leaders. Lloyd George was leaving Carnarvon for London about mid-day, as soon as the result of the election in his own constituency had been declared. His anxiety to hear the further results at the earliest moment was apparent from the arrangements that he made for having them conveyed to him during his train journey to London. This train made several halts during its run ; and since he could not receive results en route, he arranged for a relay of informants to meet him at each stop with the latest figures. These people had in readiness been sent down from headquarters

the previous night to different stations on the line. Five minutes before the train bearing Lloyd George was due at a stopping-place, the waiting informant received from headquarters a time-call by telephone, was primed with the latest results, and thereupon boarded the train and continued the journey back to London. Thus the train that bore Lloyd George picked up the latest news at intervals as it sped across Wales and the West of England.

The position improved a little as the day progressed and further results came in, and by the time Lloyd George reached London that evening there were some fifty seats to show him. All those at headquarters were anxious to know in what manner he had received the depressing intelligence of the shattering of Liberal hopes, for it was generally anticipated that his mood would not be of the sweetest; but when later in the evening I telephoned to inquire, I found that during the journey he had been in excellent form, cheerful and apparently care-free. Whether he was in reality animated by such feelings, or whether he assumed them as a mask to cover disappointment, only he can say. But since he is an old campaigner who has fought, won, and lost many political battles, he is inured to disappointments; and

it is probable that he was not unduly cast down.

Thus ended the election fight of 1929, and with it the Liberal Party's last hope of ever again becoming a large and dominant party in British politics. Thus ended all the hard work of the previous two years, all the enthusiastic campaigning, all the scheming and exploiting, all the lavish spending of money, all the high hopes. It was a bitter ending for those who had been engaged in the struggle. From the leaders to the youngest headquarters office boy, it had inevitably been a personal struggle, in which every individual effort was felt to be a contribution to the general success.

A political headquarters, perhaps more than any other organisation, is conscious of this personal interest in the ultimate result. Unlike a business organisation, whose success or failure is apparent only in the firm's ledgers, a political organisation finds its successes blazoned forth in the press; and those who have participated in them, however small may be the part they have played, are conscious of a pride in the achievement. Particularly in this instance was everybody conscious of assisting in a struggle whose aim was the resuscitation of a once-great political party; and with this unhappy term-

ination there were few who did not feel aware of the futility of all their efforts.

But that, after all, seems to be the climax of the game of politics in all its variations: Futility.

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